VISITING THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION:

THE COMMUNICATION OF WORLD HERITAGE VALUES TO TOURISTS IN IRONBRIDGE GORGE

by

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ABSTRACT

World Heritage Sites are places recognised by UNESCO as possessing 'Outstanding Universal Value'. Despite decades of work investigating how to best protect and promote them there has been relatively little consideration of how their values are actually communicated. This thesis is a qualitative study into how the World Heritage values of one particular site, Ironbridge Gorge, are communicated to tourists, looking at how these values affect the construction of the site as a destination. The thesis encompasses examination of the ways that values are formally communicated alongside investigation into how different tourist performances affect individuals' encounters and engagement with the World Heritage aspects of the site. This revealed a gap between the values for which the site is designated on the World Heritage List, which are derived from the area's significance during the Industrial Revolution, and tourist perceptions of the site as a rural idyll. Additionally, there are differences in the ways that the outstanding and universal aspects of the site's values are presented to tourists which inhibits the possibilities for deeper engagement. This is further affected by the intentions and interests of individual tourists, who ultimately define and shape the nature of their own experiences with the site.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AHD – Authorized Heritage Discourse

DCMS – Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

DMO – Destination Management Organisation

ICOMOS – International Council on Monuments and Sites

IGMT – Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

MHCLG – Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

OED – Oxford English Dictionary

OUV – Outstanding Universal Value

PWC - PriceWaterhouseCoopers

SGCT – Severn Gorge Countryside Trust

SOUV – Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

T&W – Telford and Wrekin [Council]

TTP – Telford Tourism Partnership

UNESCO – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNESCO WHC – UNESCO World Heritage Committee

UNWTO – United Nations World Tourism Organization

UKNatComm – UK National Commission for UNESCO

VEF – Visitor Economy Forum

VIC – Visitor Information Centre (located at the Museum of the Gorge)

WHS – World Heritage Site

WTTC – World Travel & Tourism Council

A note concerning naming conventions

Variants of the name of the Iron Bridge are used widely in the area both officially and unofficially. In this thesis the following distinction is used throughout:

Iron Bridge – the actual bridge which crosses the River Severn

Ironbridge – the small town located adjacent to the Iron Bridge on the northern banks of the River Severn

Severn Gorge – the geographic area of river gorge along a section of the River Severn. This is not used in the text with the exception of its use in the name of the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust.

Ironbridge Gorge – the wider area of the Severn Gorge and the tributary valleys of Coalbrookdale and Hay Brook Valley which are designated as Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site. This is occasionally abbreviated to 'the Gorge' in the following text.

Additionally the term *Old Furnace* is used to refer to the Coalbrookdale Old Furnace which is also known as the Darby Furnace or the Coalbrookdale Blast Furnace. Blists Hill Victorian Town is shortened to *Blists Hill*.

In addition to the abbreviations listed above there are two shortened form terms used to refer to things relating to World Heritage. These are *the Convention*, which refers to the UNESCO (1972) Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage' and *the List*, which refers to the 'World Heritage List'.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Tourism, global heritage and a post-industrial landscape

> The Iron Bridge, the first in the world in 1779, has given its name to a valley which contains an extraordinary concentration of buildings and monuments of what was the high technology of its day. It was the Silicon Valley of the 18th century. In less than 20 years, the Ironbridge Gorge Museum has pioneered discovery, conservation and exploitation of the vast heritage of the Gorge to such an extent that: whereas formerly nobody would have wished to visit the area except as a specialist historian, now some half million visitors annually come to see the historic sites where our modern world began (IGMT, 1986, n.p.).

It was with these words that a museum trust in Shropshire, UK, announced that Ironbridge Gorge had become the 371st property to be inscribed on the World Heritage List (UNESCO WHC, 1986). Ironbridge Gorge is the name given to a deep narrow valley on the River Severn in the English county of Shropshire (Figure 1.1). As a World Heritage Site, the name refers not only to the area along the Severn itself but also includes two tributary valleys. The Gorge contains four major distinct areas: Coalbrookdale, Ironbridge, Jackfield and Coalport (Figure 1.2). The announcement above contains the core features of the site's 'Outstanding Universal Values' (OUV), featuring the valley's role in the start of the Industrial Revolution, the fame of the Iron Bridge and the rare survival of an eighteenth century industrial landscape.

The day the news came through has itself become a part of the Ironbridge story. As Beale (2014, p75) reports, Katie Foster, then Head of Public Relations for Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (IGMT), spent the day excitedly faxing the press release quoted above whilst attending a travel trade fair. The apparently intrinsic link between inscription on the World

Heritage List (hereafter, the List) and a growth of tourist interest in the site is a fundamental part of this story. Today, a little over thirty years since that day in 1986, perceptions have changed, with the World Heritage status becoming much more habitual. This thesis is an examination of how the World Heritage status and values of Ironbridge Gorge are communicated to tourists, exploring aspects of universality, ruralness, and the individuality of tourist experience.

Figure 1.1: Location of Ironbridge Gorge in the UK

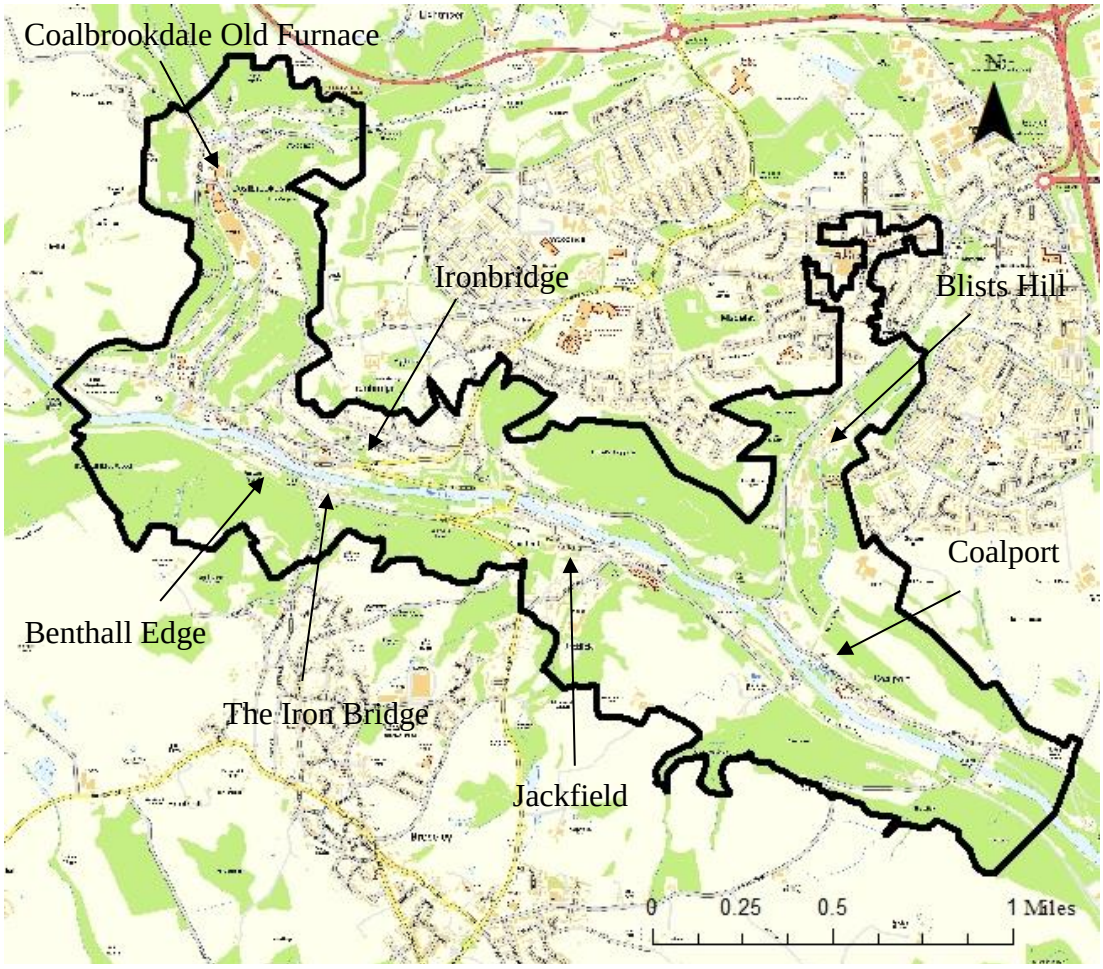

Figure 1.2: Map of Ironbridge Gorge

The List is an intriguing phenomenon: a collection of places of natural or cultural heritage from around the world which have been designated through the work of the UNESCO (1972) *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (hereafter, the Convention). The places, or 'properties', included on this list are deemed to be of value to all humanity, a universality which is founded upon their uniqueness (Jokilehto, 1999). At the time of writing the List comprised 1092 World Heritage Sites (WHS), varying in nature from expansive natural environments such as the Great Barrier Reef and the Serengeti National Park, to some of the world's most famous historic sites (UNESCO, no

date-a). Inscription on the List was initially conceived primarily as a way to identify places that should be given particular protection and conservation; places perceived as an inheritance shared by people around the world and which should, therefore, be preserved for future generations (UNESCO, 1972).

From the outset the List became synonymous with some of the most iconic tourist destinations in the world and rapidly came to be considered as a mark of quality for attracting tourists rather than as a way to promote conservation (Rodwell, 2012; Gravari-Barabas et al, 2015). The result is that, despite being based on a convention which only mentions tourism as a threat to heritage (UNESCO, 1972, article 11.4), WHSs and tourism have come to be seen as inextricably joined phenomena. There is relatively little understanding, however, of how tourists actually encounter and experience the values of World Heritage when they visit sites inscribed on the List. This research has attempted to address this gap through a case study of tourism to Ironbridge Gorge, one of the first WHSs to be inscribed from the UK.

The area now known as Ironbridge Gorge has attracted visitors since the middle of the eighteenth century. It first became a focus for wealthy visitors who came to marvel at the new industrial innovations in the area as part of the wider movement which valorised the 'industrial sublime' (Klingender, 1968; Trinder, 1988). Although its fortunes declined in the earlier part of the nineteenth century it once again began to be visited in later years, mostly by groups of visitors from the region who came to see the industries and the natural landscape of the Gorge (Trinder, 1988). Matters changed considerably from the 1950's onwards, when Ironbridge Gorge was identified as one of the most significant collections of industrial remains from the Industrial Revolution. Efforts to protect and conserve these

remains led to the establishment of a private museum trust, IGMT, which rapidly built up the area as a tourist attraction in order to finance its work (Thomas, 1982; Smith, 1989a).

In November 1986 Ironbridge Gorge was inscribed onto the List; one of the original seven sites to be nominated from the UK (UNESCO WHC, 1986). This initial group included Neolithic monumental sites, a unique geological landscape, a series of state and religious buildings from the medieval period, a remote and derelict island home to rare seabirds and an eighteenth century landscape garden. Ironbridge Gorge was the only industrial site amongst them and was one of the earliest industrial sites to be added to the List from anywhere in the world (UNESCO WHC, 1986; Falconer, 2010). Today, Ironbridge Gorge attracts around a million visitors every year and is home to ten museums, numerous shops, cafes and other tourist facing businesses largely focused around the iconic Iron Bridge across the River Severn (T&W Council, 2017).

The industrial history of Ironbridge Gorge and the extensive survival of eighteenth century industrial remains form the basis for the assertion that the area possesses OUV, the prerequisite for inscription on the List. The communication to tourists of the values relating to this is the focus of this thesis. One of the central tensions which will be explored is the relationship between the fundamentally leisure focused pursuit of tourism and the heritage of industry which is so intrinsically bound up with the history of labour and production. In 1946 a Thomas Cook brochure featured Ironbridge Gorge in the following way:

> "The cradle of the iron trade," as this quiet village has been called, may not suggest holiday attractions, yet it has many. The river Severn flows through the dale, from which rise densely-wooded hills, and the Severn offers fine sport for anglers. The countryside appeals to enthusiastic walkers. There is a beautiful garden here, with a bowling green. Golf near by. (Thomas Cook, 1946, n.p.)

Today, as in 1946, there is a tension between the industrial significance of the area and its potential attractiveness as a tourist destination. The World Heritage designation is not particularly emphasised to visitors; despite being widely signposted around the area, marketing materials generally focus on encouraging visitors to go to the museums or treat the wider area as a destination for a longer break. Further, decades of conservation and tourism focused development has transformed this industrial area into one fairly typical of the English countryside, quaint and picturesque, and this is central to the marketing produced by the local tourism industry. This has led to an interesting, if problematic, tension between the historic significance of the Gorge as the 'birthplace of the Industrial Revolution' and its modern identity as a tourist attraction.

A second major theme in this study has been the difficulty in balancing the representation of the varying parts of a landscape, especially when certain elements of it, through marketing and iconicity, attract far greater numbers of visitors. The history of Ironbridge Gorge makes little sense if only seen in part; its story connects the geology and topography of the Gorge to the lives of generations of people who lived, worked and innovated here. Yet the nature of tourism and the disproportionate fame of certain parts of this landscape mean that many visitors will only encounter a small part of this story. In this thesis I explore what the role of World Heritage has been in shaping the way the stories of the site and the values these represent are communicated. One area of discussion is the comparative role of outstanding and universal values in the construction of Ironbridge Gorge as a destination, examining the role of tourists and tourism industry stakeholders in constructing tourist experiences of the area in comparison to the co-construction of it as a landscape layered with values.

1.2 Research Questions

This thesis forms one part of a four-part study on the communication of World Heritage values to different communities of interest in Ironbridge Gorge. This element focuses on tourism and the communication of World Heritage values to tourists whilst the other elements examine communication with educational groups (Davies, 2018), the community (Trelka, 2018), and those with a specialist interest in industrial heritage (Raine, forthcoming). Taken together, these four studies are a uniquely in-depth exploration of the ways that World Heritage values are conceptualised and communicated within a single site. The communication of World Heritage values is a facet of WHSs which has seen very little investigation. While there is considerable research, discussed in Chapter 2, on the nature of heritage (e.g. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006; Smith, 2006) and the effects of tourism on it (e.g. Pedersen, 2002; Leask and Fyall, 2006), the reality of how values are transferred has been little explored, especially in the context of tourism. In this study I want to examine tourist perceptions of the values of Ironbridge Gorge and gain an understanding of how those perceptions have been formed.

As a case study for considering the communication of World Heritage values to tourists Ironbridge Gorge has many strengths. The last thirty years as a WHS serve as a counterpoint to earlier tourism, allowing reflection on the things which are related to World Heritage and those which are more specific to Ironbridge Gorge. As an industrial site, it provides a contrast to the more commonly studied types of WHSs, such as religious buildings and ancient ritual sites (e.g. Poria et al, 2001; Rakic and Chambers, 2008; Renwick, 2017; Palau Samuell et al, 2012) or iconic natural features like the Great Barrier Reef or Giant's Causeway (e.g. Moscardo et al, 2001; Crawford, 2015). Further, Ironbridge Gorge is what could be

considered as an ‘ordinary’ WHS. While this might seem a contradiction in terms not all of the places inscribed on the List are equally well known or visited in equal numbers, nor would that be something to encourage. Compared to work on new inscriptions and globally iconic sites there has been less attention paid to the effects of listing on places like Ironbridge Gorge which sit in the middle of this scale. Like many sites inscribed on the List it is undoubtedly of great historic significance for the role it played in a particular period in time but it is not a global icon to the same extent that some WHSs are.

The overarching question this study has attempted to address is:

> What role do World Heritage values play in the construction of Ironbridge Gorge as a tourist destination?

This question has two main elements. The first of these is the role and nature of World Heritage values in the context of tourism to a WHS, recognising that there are multiple values that may be ascribed to a place and that World Heritage values may only be one part of that wider whole. Although the List was not originally intended to create tourist destinations or define the ways in which tourists engage with places on the List, the designation has subsequently become closely linked with the development of tourism and tourists are often key audiences for a WHS. As a result, the way in which World Heritage values form part of the tourist encounter with a place is of particular interest. The second element of the question focuses on the construction of Ironbridge Gorge as a destination. The multiple values of a place are ascribed by multiple groups of people, having considerable place-making effects both practically and on the way a place is imagined. By exploring these two aspects of values and the people who ascribe them alongside their effects on the creation

of a tourist destination it is possible to open up many different avenues for examination. To support this study I identified three specific research questions:

1. What are the values of Ironbridge Gorge WHS and how are these formally communicated to visitors?

2. How do tourists experience Ironbridge Gorge WHS and how much does variation in tourist activity and location affect how they encounter the values of the site?

3. How is Ironbridge Gorge represented in tourist narratives of Ironbridge Gorge and how relevant are World Heritage values in these?

These questions have allowed me to explore different aspects of the case study site linking the aspects of it as a space, as a destination for tourists and as a WHS.

1.3 Overall research methodology

To examine the communication of World Heritage values to tourists in Ironbridge Gorge I applied a combination of qualitative methods drawing on Grounded Theory Methods as an interpretative framework within which to build and develop theories (see section 4.3). The two main parts of this study focused on the work of those involved with managing tourism to Ironbridge Gorge and the experience of the tourists themselves. I carried out fieldwork over the course of a year, beginning in the autumn of 2016 and continuing until the end of the summer 2017. Tourism is seasonal, fluctuating across the course of the year and even within a single day as the effects of changing weather and the rhythms of mealtimes affect the activities of tourists. I took advantage of the relative quietness of winter to begin my study by interviewing a wide range of individuals involved in the tourism industry of

Ironbridge Gorge and the wider area. I also examined the products of their work, the interpretative materials and marketing available both within the Gorge and on the internet. By spending the winter months within the site, walking its footpaths and spending time in the museums and shops, I developed a detailed experiential map of the landscape, which I used in developing the research questions and spatial foci of the study. Throughout the spring and summer my focus became the tourists themselves, combining interviews with participant and non-participant observation. As a counterpoint to the analysis of materials produced for the consumption of tourists I also collected and examined materials produced by them, including Trip Advisor reviews and photographs posted on the social media platform Instagram.

Before beginning this study it was vital to define the key terms involved in the overarching question, specifically 'tourism/tourists' and 'World Heritage values'. Tourism is defined in a number of different ways. The UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2010) distinguishes a tourist from a same-day visitor on the basis of an overnight stay, defining a tourists as:

> a traveller taking a trip to a destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited (UNWTO, 2010, p10)

In contrast, Smith (1989b, p1) defines a tourist as "a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change". The definition one chooses depends on the purpose it will be put to. The characteristic of an overnight stay would be an essential component in assessing the required number of beds available in a destination but not necessarily in a study of the social impacts of large numbers of daily visitors at a beauty spot. The numbers of tourists visiting Ironbridge Gorge is

estimated to be around one million annually (Telford & Wrekin Council, 2017). A substantial proportion of these visitors are day trippers. If the defining characteristic of the tourist is an overnight stay, Ironbridge Gorge could be argued to be only a minor tourist attraction, something that would seem very strange on a warm day in mid-August. Smith's (1989b) definition, focusing as it does on the leisurely context of the trip, seems more apt. For the purposes of this research I needed a definition of tourism which would allow me to examine the relationship formed by visitors with the values of the site, whilst also distinguishing between tourists and the local community, who are the focus of Trelka's (2018) study. In her research, members of the local community were identified through residence within the Gorge or its immediate environs. I settled on the definition, simplistic as it may appear, that a tourist is a person who is performing as a tourist. In other words, if a person who does not live in the Gorge is visiting for any of a wide range of leisurely purposes, such as sightseeing, museum visiting, walking, relaxing and shopping, then they are a tourist.

'World Heritage values' proved to be another concept that required some consideration. There is a wide range of work on the nature of heritage values which encompass many aspects from the social to the economic (e.g. Lipe, 1984; Carman, 1996; Samuels, 2008). World Heritage values have been considered in these ways in the past as well, with its potential worth in economic terms a particular focus of research (e.g. PWC, 2007; UKNatComm, 2016). However, WHSs are themselves the product of a way of conceiving the wider values of heritage to humanity. World Heritage values must be considered within the context of UNESCO, the intergovernmental organisation through which WHSs are created. To be inscribed a site must be deemed to possess 'Outstanding Universal Value(s)', which are established by meeting at least one of ten criteria in addition to required levels of

authenticity, integrity and, if applicable, the presence of a management plan (UNESCO WHC, 2017). I have chosen to focus on the communication of OUV, specifically the things about a site that are recognised in its Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV).

1.4 Organisation of the thesis

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 provides an overview of previous research and key theoretical work relating to World Heritage, heritage, and tourism. This research has drawn on scholarship from critical heritage studies and tourism studies, which themselves often incorporate aspects of anthropology, cultural geography and sociology. Interdisciplinarity has been essential in allowing me to explore the multifaceted nature of the communication of value to tourists. Chapter 2 begins with an examination of heritage, heritage value and tourism to heritage sites, particularly exploring the way in which places and things become valorised as 'heritage' and what this means in terms of how they can then be encountered by tourists. The second part of the chapter traces the development of how tourism and tourists have been studied, identifying significant theories and approaches to understanding tourism and tourist performances. The specific context of this research is tourism at a WHS so the third section of the chapter describes the history and implementation of UNESCO's World Heritage Convention, identifying the links between the values of heritage and tourist experience. The final part of the chapter identifies previous research relevant to tourism at Ironbridge Gorge itself.

Chapter 3, 'Becoming and Being Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site', provides the context to contemporary tourism to Ironbridge Gorge through an exploration of the history of the area and its current management structures. The history of Ironbridge Gorge is clearly of central importance in its OUVs, which relate directly to its industrial success in the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The development of industry in the area forms not only the justification for the site's existence as a heritage attraction but the more recent parts of its history have also shaped the ways it evolved in organisational terms and its place in public consciousness. In terms of this research, the history of tourism also offers an interesting juxtaposition against which to study the current motivations and practices of tourists in the twenty-first century. The first part of Chapter 3 outlines the history of Ironbridge Gorge, particularly in relation to the development of the area as a tourist attraction, considering the phases of its emergence as an important place, its transition to becoming a place of heritage and the last thirty years of being a WHS. The second half of the chapter focuses on the direct management and organisation of the site in relation to tourism between 2016 and 2018, the period in which this study was carried out. This identifies the management structures that were in place at the time of writing and the role of different tourism industry stakeholders.

Chapter 4 details the methods used within this study and the approaches taken to develop and adapt these to the case study site. The chapter begins with a discussion of the research questions followed by the reasons why I chose to use a series of qualitative methods to undertake the study. The main body of the chapter is a detailed account of how each phase of the research was approached. This includes archival work, the collection of interpretative materials, interviews with tourism industry stakeholders and tourists, as well as observation of tourists across the site. The chapter concludes by outlining the ethical considerations and limitations of undertaking this kind of research and how these issues were addressed.

Chapter 5 considers the creation of the destination of Ironbridge Gorge, examining the way that imaginaries of the Gorge have emerged and the interrelationship between stories and place in the construction of different spaces within the Gorge. The first half of the chapter

looks at what it means to be a World Heritage destination, considering the perspectives of tourism industry stakeholders regarding what World Heritage adds to or changes in the nature of Ironbridge Gorge. Through this it became clear that many perceived World Heritage status as little more than a quality mark and there were also tensions between the industrial nature of the site and the perception that visitors are more interested in rural attractions. The effects of these perceptions on the way the site is subsequently portrayed is examined through examples of marketing materials produced by three key organisations. Issues arising from this include the effects of differential power between the many individuals and organisations involved in communicating with tourists and how this affects the ways particular narratives are portrayed. In the second part of the chapter the effects of the multiple layers of stories and storytelling in the Gorge are explored in relation to how different spaces have emerged within the Gorge. This focuses on the physical and imaginary aspects of place constructed through the way the site is managed and how that provides the context for tourists to experience it.

Chapter 6 focuses on tourist encounters with Ironbridge Gorge, examining first what tourist narratives reveal about their engagement with the values of the site and then looking at how different types of tourist performance create possibilities for intimacy or distance with heritage. The final part of the chapter looks at the two aspects of narrative and performance through an examination of the tourist-produced photography posted on Instagram. In this chapter the role of tourists in the co-construction of their own experiences and in relation to the values of the WHS as a place are considered, reflecting on the intentionality of tourists, the uniqueness and commonalties of individual tourists' experience and the effects of site management on the potential for intimacy or distance between visitor and place.

Chapter 7 is the concluding chapter and is an extended reflection on three themes identified through this research. The first of these is the way in which OUV is communicated to tourists, or more specifically the way that outstanding values are emphasised at the expense of the universal and the effects that this has on communication. The second theme is the role of dissonance on the communication of World Heritage values, specifically the way that the pervasive imaginary of the rural historic in English tourism (Watson, 2013), creates difficulties for communicating industrial heritage within an apparently rural environment such as Ironbridge Gorge. The final theme discussed is the construction of World Heritage values in contrast with the co-construction of tourist experience, particularly reflecting on the need for greater inclusion of tourist experience in the consideration of how WHSs are managed.

CHAPTER 2

HERITAGE, TOURISM AND VALUE

2.1 Introduction

Researching tourism can be challenging. By its nature it is characterised by the short duration of the encounter of a visitor with a place. Further, there is a great variety of origins, motivations, prior knowledge and socio-economic background amongst those who might be defined as tourists. With around a million visitors coming to Ironbridge Gorge every year (T&W Council, 2017), understanding the way that the site's values are communicated to them is an essential component to wider research on the ways that different communities of interest engage with these values. As a long-term study of the effects of a touristic visit to Ironbridge Gorge on individual tourists is not possible within the scope of this research, if even at all, this study focuses on the ways in which the tourists encounter the site. In this chapter the ways that different branches of scholarship, including cultural geography, critical heritage studies and tourism studies, have approached the relationships between tourists and places will be discussed.

The study of tourism and the study of heritage are both well-established fields. However, the understanding of how tourists engage with the values of heritage sites is a less well understood area. There has been a considerable amount of discussion of how heritage sites are managed in relation to tourism, but this often focuses on tourists as an economic resource, a threat, or both (e.g. Cochrane and Tapper, 2006). There is work which explores the positive aspects of heritage tourism, including considering its potential for deep and transformative

encounters which evoke memory and help build personal and group identities (e.g. Bagnall, 2003). Investigation of the actual mechanisms by which these meaningful encounters are mediated is frequently missing, however. This trend is even more exaggerated when the heritage site in question is designated on the World Heritage List, where the potential for meaningful encounters between tourists and place is often assumed rather than questioned.

In this chapter I will examine existing schools of thought relating to heritage and heritage value, tourists' experience of the places they visit, and the nature of World Heritage. Throughout the chapter three themes will be discussed. The first relates to the creation and nature of value, particularly considering how heritage value is ascribed and the effect that this valorisation has on places. The second theme is the ways that places are constructed through the processes of heritage and tourism, while the third theme concerns the nature of tourists' encounters with heritage and tourist destinations. The chapter begins with a discussion of scholarship relating to the nature of heritage and heritage value. This is followed by sections identifying particularly relevant studies of tourism and tourists and an examination of the UNESCO (1972) World Heritage Convention and how this is understood in relation to tourism. To further contextualise the research set out in this thesis, the final section outlines previous work carried out in Ironbridge Gorge, the case study site.

2.2 Heritage and value

As a starting point for any discussion of the values of heritage, be that World Heritage or otherwise, the nature of heritage itself must be given some consideration. This section examines the ways in which the concept of heritage has been defined and theorised, first by exploring views on the nature of heritage and the values of heritage before looking at

research which has questioned the effects of heritage on the construction and experience of place.

2.2.1 The nature of heritage

'Heritage' is a term which is used to encompass both physical places and objects as well as traditions and practices which are considered to be valuable for their association with the past. The technical definition of the word is "that which has been or may be inherited" (OED, no date-a, n.p.). As such, it is a term which encompasses ideas of age and possession whilst also inferring that there is some sort of value related to that which has been inherited. While the term can be used individually for things relating to the history of a particular group of people or a place, it has also come to encompass the totality of the material, customs and places valued by a society or even humanity as a whole. In the context of the critical study of heritage another variant of this definition is often used, one which identifies heritage not as the material inherited but the use of the past in the present (e.g. Graham et al, 2000, p2; Smith, 2006). For example, while the former, dictionary, definition would categorise a medieval castle as *being* heritage, the latter identifies heritage as the process by which the medieval castle is deemed to be valuable and worthy of protection. This emphasises that the existence of heritage is not self-evident; it is something created, used and negotiated in specific socio-cultural contexts. The castle may exist physically but its corporeality does not make it significant; that is the result of a process in which values are ascribed to things associated with the past.

De Silvey (2017, p3) identifies the crucial role of choice in the process of creating heritage, stating that "we live in a world dense with things left behind by people who came before us, but we only single out some of these things for our attention and care". It is important to ask,

therefore, why and how this selection process occurs. Smith's (2006, p11) concept of the "Authorized Heritage Discourse" (AHD) has become one of the most influential ideas in the study of how heritage is created. Smith argues that, as a discourse, heritage acts powerfully in modern society, ordering how we act and think about both past and present times, reinforcing existing power structures and national narratives (Smith, 2006, pp11-12, 29). The discourse of heritage frequently takes the following form: heritage is perceived as an inheritance from the past which demands a duty of preservation, so that we, in turn, can pass it on to those who come after us (Smith, 2006). While being framed as something relating to the past, heritage is something which is fundamentally related to the present and the ways in which we think about the future (Harrison, 2015; Högberg et al, 2018).

Through conceptualising heritage as something inherited and, thus, valued, the discourse emphasises the need to conserve these valuable things. An inheritance demands a duty of care. The requirement for conservation underpins the role of official management and expert opinion in heritage. By controlling the physical management of heritage it is possible to constrain the ways in which heritage is interpreted and engaged with. This ensures that heritage continues to be produced through the ongoing ascription of value to things associated with the past. This discourse of heritage is incredibly powerful and has been spread across the world. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006, p161) gives a comprehensive description of the processes through which heritage is created, stating that it is:

> metacultural operations that extend museological values and methods (collection, documentation, preservation, presentation, evaluation and interpretation) to living persons, their knowledge, practices, artifacts, social worlds, and life spaces.

The result of this is that a conservation-based ethos which emerged from Western conceptions of the past has come to be imposed on the full range of things with associations with the past around the world.

2.2.2 Heritage value

If heritage is a process by which values and meaning are ascribed to physical places, objects, traditions and practices associated with the past, then it is important to examine the nature of these values and how the processes of ascribing them came about. Firstly, value itself must be defined. The words 'value' and 'values' are often used synonymously but can have subtly different meanings. Miller (2008, p1123) addresses this dichotomy, defining 'value' as the financial price of something and 'values' as things of inalienable worth which cannot be given a price. This is a useful distinction which lends itself to an understanding of value which is based on a dualism held in tension. The term 'value(s)' represents both something inalienable (values) and something which is attributed to things beyond the person engaging in the valorisation (value). Brown et al (2002, p53), in a paper exploring ways to encompass sense of place in environmental assessment, state that "people hold certain 'values' but also express 'value' for certain objects". This usefully distinguishes between values which are held within and values which are expressed actively in relation to external things. The value(s) of heritage have been discussed variously as inalienable and alienable, as will be seen below, making the processes by which they are ascribed essential to determining how they are communicated.

In a discussion of value in archaeology, a field closely related to the production of heritage, Samuels (2008, p91) emphasises a definition of value as a verb rather than a noun. It is through the act of expressing value that it comes into being. This is an idea with a long

history. Appadurai, in his work on commodities, *The Social Life of Things* (1986, p3), stated that it was in exchange that value came into existence. This means that value(s) exist, and are formed, as Mason (2002, p8) puts it, "in the nexus between ideas and things". In the case of commodities this nexus comes into being as a monetary or exchange value is agreed and transferred. In the case of heritage, where value is often ascribed outside of this transactional context, something else must be happening. Carman (1995; 1996) has used Thompson's (1979) 'Rubbish Theory' to investigate this, arguing that heritage is created through the decontextualisation of things into rubbish before having value added to them through stages of selection and recontextualisation into the public domain. Thus, the ascription of value is a transformative and creative process. In the case of heritage, the object of the expression of value, something 'inherited' from the past, becomes significant through the process of transforming its original use into one set apart from the everyday.

Beyond the discussion of whether heritage has value and how this is obtained, the actual nature of 'heritage values' has been the topic of much debate. While a complete review of the literature relating to the nature of heritage value is beyond the scope of this chapter there are several central discussions which are worth highlighting here. One of the major differences between how the value of heritage is perceived by scholars relates to the dichotomy between value and values identified above. Fundamentally there is the question of whether heritage is something which has financial worth or if, rather, it is something inalienable. Heritage is often referred to as a resource or an asset, which refers to the ways in which it is used by people in the present. One particularly influential work on this is Lipe's (1984) paper which argued that the value of heritage is not intrinsic and is derived from the contexts in which it is used, be they economic, aesthetic, associative or informational. This is firmly in the 'expressed value' category of Brown et al (2002). A more recent form of this

approach is found in English Heritage's (2008, p19) professional guidance document *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance*, which states that "the historic environment is a shared resource". Within this guidance English Heritage identified four categories of heritage value: evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal (English Heritage, 2008, pp27-31). However, as Carman et al (1999) argue in relation to the value of archaeology, if considered as a resource, heritage becomes something which can be evaluated and compared for its economic worth, going against the notion that it can be 'priceless'. Instead, they suggest considering heritage as a form of "corporate saving", something held in common and considered priceless but which sits outside the usual systems of economic valuation (Carman et al, 1999, p416).

Regardless of whether an approach to heritage value tends towards a view of it as a resource or as something more inalienable, the relationship between people and the things they deem to be heritage will form the context within which value can be examined. Stephenson (2008, p128) has highlighted the way that, by modelling significance by categories, the dynamic nature of people's interaction with place and landscape can be missed. There are lots of things at work here, not least the work of heritage managers in regulating value (Smith, 2009). Conservation, an integral part of Western heritage management focused on protecting the value of particular things and places, has been critiqued as a force which, rather than actually protecting value, freezes it in a moment, halting the ongoing narratives of the subject of conservation (Walter, 2014). Consideration of the idea of social value has been an attempt within the heritage sector to understand the wider, and continually evolving, potential context of heritage values. The Australia ICOMOS *Charter for Places of Cultural Significance* (the 'Burra Charter'), first adopted in 1979, uses this term (Australia ICOMOS, 1979, article 1). While heritage professionals may ascribe values such as 'aesthetic',

'historical' or 'evidential' in a place or object, these may be quite different to the social values attached by the wider community and by visitors (Johnston, 1992; Jones, 2004; English Heritage, 2008). Johnston (1992, p7) has identified a number of characteristics that a place with social value might have, including that they "tie the past affectionately to the present", which specifically links the notion of heritage value with the ways that it affects people's ability to relate to the past. By understanding both the things valued about an object or place, and the ways in which the people who interact with them express these values, a much fuller picture of the nature of heritage value can be built (Stephenson, 2008).

2.2.3 Heritage and place

By altering the way in which physical places and the activities and objects within them are understood, heritage contributes to the ongoing production and experience of space and place. The specificity of a place looms large in representations of tourist destinations and heritage sites often feature heavily. While one reason for this use of heritage in the promotion of destinations is almost certainly to secure the financial benefits that tourism can bring (Ashworth et al, 2007), it is not clear that economic factors are the only reason that the tourism and heritage industries have grown so closely together. One significant element may be the role of heritage in contributing to a sense of place. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998, p153) states that "heritage is a way of producing 'hereness'". The long term, embodied experience of landscape involves being aware of the time depth of it, reflecting seasonality, geological, and historical change (Stephenson, 2008). Many places are centred around features which express the passage of time (Ingold, 1993). The active promotion of heritage in tourism may be an attempt to allow tourists to connect with the deeper values of place, something which is usually considered to need longer term experience (Stephenson, 2008).

The active use of the past in our current relationships with places is not neutral. DeSilvey (2017, p3) carefully positions heritage and place in relation to the creators of them, saying that, through the elevation of certain things to the position of heritage we require them "to remember the pasts that produced them". One of the significant features of the role of official bodies in this elevation of particular features to being considered heritage is the expert validation of their authenticity. Jones (2009, p137) sees the perception of authenticity, or genuineness, as central to the way that people are able to interact with objects or places. Bruner (1994) explores this in his study of New Salem, a heritage attraction advertised as 'an authentic reproduction', considering the ways in which authenticity contributed to the ways that the place was perceived both by those who worked there and those who visited it. One of the aspects he considered was the idea that being an 'authentic reproduction' equated to being an 'authorised' one (Bruner, 1994, p400). Through the use of the past, which can appear to be outside of politics, particular constructions of place can be brought into being, reinforcing the power of those who are able to create and control heritage (Smith, 2006).

In England, Watson (2013) has argued that there is a powerful cultural construct which he terms the 'rural historic'. This is something which emerged with the increasing industrialisation of England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which led to the history of the country being imagined through a particularly rural lens and associated with a countryside made of quaint villages and medieval castles. This, and similar narratives perpetuated through authorising heritage bodies, use heritage to the benefit of particular groups, to the exclusion of others. Graham et al (2000, p25) emphasise that heritage often reflects the most powerful groups in society and excludes others, referencing the same nostalgic England that Watson (2013) remarks on to highlight how it prioritises those in

Britain who identify as having an English past. Heritage, they claim, is inherently dissonant (Graham et al, 2000, p24).

2.2.4 Encountering heritage

In the context of tourism the inter-relationship between visitor, place and heritage is usually a short term one. The ways in which tourists might encounter heritage are, thus, potentially different to the longer term engagement that comes from dwelling in a particular place, although this may be different for visitors who return to a place over time. Holtorf (2010, pp44-45) has argued that it is during travelling that people engage with heritage at the deepest level, but somewhat counterintuitively this engagement with heritage relates to the places they have come from, rather than the places they are visiting. As tourists are only visiting a place temporarily the effect of heritage on tourists has within it an inherent tension between the desire of a tourist to actively engage with the values of a place and the short duration of the visit within which this engagement takes place. Interestingly, this leads to the possibility that deeper interaction with the values of a heritage site during a touristic visit may actually be mediated through points of connection carried with the visitor themselves, rather than anything done directly by the heritage site and those involved in its communication.

The distance between a tourist and a place that they are visiting, or at least the unfamiliarity, may actually be beneficial in creating a context where people are able to encounter places, and heritage in particular ways. In a study of stakeholder perceptions of the World Heritage site of Québec City in Canada, Evans (2002, p134) quoted a resident as saying that:

> Often I would like to suffer a bout of amnesia – I would forget my city completely and then arrive there like the other visitors in the world. I would like

> to experience that moment of wonder. I would like to discover the surprises of my own city. But it is far from beautiful when seen from close up.

The tourist, in this Québécois perspective, is able to see the value of the city in a different way than the local. However, as the local resident continues, "if everything were shiny and beautiful Québec would not be a city" (Evans, 2002, p134), implying that the tourist perspective of the city is an inauthentic one. Whether local or tourist, distance may actually qualitatively affect the connection between a person and a place. Willim (2006) argues that distance is a prerequisite in valuing particular forms of heritage, in this case what he terms the 'industrial cool'. The coolness of it actively requires distance to be retained, the attraction, in part, being derived from its unfamiliarity. Willim's example relates to the necessary detachment required to find aesthetic pleasure in run down industrial sites; familiarity could cloud this vision with the realities of de-industrialisation. In spite of this, the nature of tourism, which involves people travelling to a place in order to experience it, suggests that relative nearness is an important part of how people engage with the values of a place, although this is certainly not the only way in which this can happen. Pocock's (2002; 2006) research on tourist experiences of the Great Barrier Reef has highlighted the significance of embodied experience of place, utilising all of the senses. She argues that the technological advancements which so often mediate the experience of the Reef, such as diving equipment and underwater colour photography, actually diminish the ability of people to engage with its values.

Heritage is considered to play an important part in framing and informing the ability of people to negotiate their identity, both as individuals and communities (Dicks, 2000; Holtorf, 2005; Harrison, 2010). Macdonald (2012, p18) states that "heritage turns the past into something visitable", its immanence making it something that can be grasped, understood

and used in the negotiation of memory and identity. This forms a contrast to the problem of tourism as a short term encounter, identifying the act of visiting a place as a fundamental aspect in how its meaning and value can become significant in personal identity construction. The act of ascribing value to things, constructing them as heritage, is an act of "past-presencing", which allows it to be used in framing and organising ideas about where we came from and who we might be now (Macdonald, 2012, p15; Ashley, 2016). Meskell's (2004, p185) work on material culture suggests that artefacts act as conduits between the past and the present, "congealed memories and symbolic storehouses" that act as a tangible connection allowing us to negotiate our personal interaction with our current place in time. Heritage sites aid in the construction of the perception of this, providing both the mental framework and physical arena for people to engage with the present by using the past as a way of ordering and reworking meanings in the present (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2010; Holtorf, 2005).

2.3 Tourists and Tourism

2.3.1 The nature and significance of tourism

Economically tourism is one of the world's largest industries, generating around 10% of GDP and employing 1 in 10 people globally in 2016 (WTTC, 2017). In that year there were 1,235 million international tourist arrivals, a number which does not even include domestic travel and day trips in its calculation (UNWTO, 2017). Despite, or perhaps because of the enormity of tourism as a global human practice, there are different ways in which it is defined. As discussed in Chapter 1 (see section 1.3), I have chosen to align this research with those definitions which focus on the behaviour and intentions of tourists rather than following the more restrictive typology of the UNWTO (2010, p10) who distinguish a tourist

from a same-day visitor on the basis of a stay away from home for at least one night and less than a year. The definition of tourism used by Smith (1989b, p1) identifies that tourists, however varied their individual motivations are for travelling, can be identified as a group by the shared characteristics of travel, leisure, a desire for something different to normal life and the temporary nature of the interlude.

The study of tourism has been a growing subject of research across a number of disciplines, including sociology and anthropology (summarised in Crouch, 2009, Franklin, 2009, Leite and Graburn, 2009). Within the body of work addressing tourism there are several central ideas relating to the four elements of Smith's (1989b) definition. Travel, the first element, is fundamental to tourism. In order to temporarily arrive at a place other than work or home, some form of journey is required. However, tourism need not involve a journey of great distance. Whilst modern travelling technology allows people to easily move around the world, tourism relies more on the change of perception created through the practice of travelling, rather than the actual distance covered. Graburn (1989, p24) describes this as the "magic of tourism", which can transform even a familiar setting into a non-ordinary one through movement, for which he uses the example of a picnic in the garden. This is slightly different from the typical conceptualisation of tourism, which is often associated with images of crowded beaches and distant cities. It is a useful distinction which emphasises that, in addition to physical motion, tourism involves a form of mental extension, a reaching out to somewhere else in the imagination, which begins before the journey has started and can continue in memory long after it has ended.

Another facet of tourism is that it is temporary. The beginning and the end of the journey are essential features. For some scholars, such as Graburn (1983; 1989) and Sharpley (2009),

this characteristic of temporariness and its associated structural elements of separation (leaving home), liminality and reaggregation (returning home), suggests that the rituals of tourism make it akin to pilgrimage. As such it forms episodes in the rhythm of life. Others identify it as part of a cycle of recreation practices, which similarly follow a sequential pattern, with work followed by rest and recreation, which is once more followed by work and so on (Krippendorf, 1987). These theories are not mutually exclusive, as it can be argued that recreation itself follows a ritualised pattern. Indeed, it is notable that both these areas of thought view temporary periods of travel as an integral part of the practice of life in the modern world. The reasons why people might engage in tourism are discussed further below, but it is clear that leisured travel is a central feature of the habitus of living in the world today, to the point that it can be considered as a ritual, recurring in a cyclical manner often associated with particular moments in the year, or at certain times in life.

Smith's (1989b) definition has two further elements: leisure and difference, which relate to the question of why people engage in tourism at all. It is clear that they do so and in large numbers across the world. This could be simply the result of the fact that people can now, due to increased resources and improved travelling technology, engage in a universal human urge to travel for leisure (see Graburn, 1989). It is true that travel has formed a significant part of human activities historically, although far fewer people were able to engage in it. From the seventeenth century new travelling practices began to emerge, including the Grand Tour of the European elites, spas and seaside resorts and Thomas Cook's package tours, driven by a range of factors from religious observance or scientific discovery to the emerging leisure of the 19th century (Chambers, 2000, Franklin, 2008; Towner, 1995). Meethan (2001, p9) describes this as the "conspicuous consumption of leisure", identifying simultaneously

the importance of leisure and the significance of acquiring cultural capital through the consumption of it.

Leisure is not exclusive to tourism so the reasons why people would seek somewhere different to engage in leisure activities also need to be considered. All of the reasons described above can be considered 'push' factors: reasons to leave one thing or place for another. Other reasons to travel, which are focused on the attractions of a particular destination or activity can be grouped as 'pull' factors (Park, 2014). A desire to visit somewhere different is in itself a powerful pull factor. In *The Tourist Gaze,* originally published in 1990 but subsequently revised, Urry argued that it was the distinction between ordinary everyday experiences and the extraordinary, different, features encountered through travel which enable people to look at things as tourists (Urry, 1990, p3; Urry and Larsen 2011, p4).

2.3.2 Encountering place

One of the facets of modern life is that experiences, alongside the more traditional economic offerings of commodities, goods and services, are one of the most commonly created and consumed products (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Tourism is heavily influenced by this; the fundamental thing on offer to tourists is an experience and this creates the intriguing question of how much agency and creativity tourists themselves have, as experience is an inherently individual thing. It is clear that the construction and promotion of certain places as destinations is a highly mediated process, which can be seen taken to the extreme in the form of the 'package' holiday or coach trip. Following a Foucauldian approach, Cheong and Miller (2000, p379) have stated that tourists can be seen as the targets rather than the agents in tourism. Despite the illusion of power in the hands of the tourists, the 'consumers', their

experience is mediated through communication with locals, professionals and countless other sources of information. Tourists, from this perspective, are seen as a largely passive group, following a societal requirement to travel for leisure and consuming this leisure through specially created experiences at 'destinations' constructed for that purpose.

Tourism involves actively engaging with places, usually in a repetitive, socially acceptable manner. Edensor (1998) describes tourist actions as performances, which are carefully scripted and staged. This is a useful concept for considering the question of agency. Conceptualising tourism as performance allows tourists to be recognised as individual agents with their own pre-existing knowledge, preferences and free will, whilst also observing that most tourist activity is very similar and concentrated at specific places. Following the staging of particular locations, which physically encourage certain actions and restrict others, as well as the 'direction' and 'stage management' of tourism professionals and tourism resources such as guide books, tourists perform generally recognisable activities. These might include walking, gazing, photographing, reminiscing, purchasing souvenirs and telling stories (Edensor, 1998; Edensor, 2000a; Bagnall, 2003; Gouthro and Palmer, 2011). This is a learned behaviour. Robinson (2005) emphasises that tourists can draw on a large corpus of potential knowledge on how to be a tourist, which expands beyond just prior experience of travel, including the books and other media we have been exposed to throughout our lives.

Tourists, while acting within expected frameworks and visiting places frequented by other tourists, are acting out of their own desires, knowledge and previous experience. This can be seen as a creative process, where the tourist does not just follow the activities identified in a guide book or digital guide, but individualises them for their own purposes and preferences (Harrison, 2002; Bohlin and Brandt, 2014). Urry and Larsen (2011) draw on

Feifer's (1985) concept of the 'post-tourist' to explore the more playful and self-aware approaches of some tourists. A post-tourist is a person who is fully aware that they are engaging in 'staged' activities but finds this to be an enjoyable game. An example of this might be the taking of 'selfies' in an ironic and self-effacing manner, believing it to be clichéd but enjoying the practice regardless.

It has been contested that tourist performances are also performative: they shape the way people engage with and understand the world, and create their self-narratives within it (Edensor, 2000a; Crouch, 2009; Franklin, 2008). Performativity requires the performance to become habituated, informing an individual's perception of what is normal, but Edensor (2009) has argued that this does not mean that the performers need to be completely unreflexive. Instead, he states that people move between being reflexive and unreflexive, and that even self-conscious performances, such as those of the post-tourist, can become normal with repetition. Even when practiced entirely unreflexively, the repetition of clichéd tourist practices has an important function in maintaining the 'myths' of places, which is significant in the context of heritage and AHD. Sterling (2017, p97) has shown how tourist photography at Angkor, Cambodia, actively works to reinforce a myth of a "lost, ruined civilisation buried in the jungle". Performance and performativity are important concepts for the analysis of what tourism does, as they allow research into the practical, visible actions of tourists to provide insight into the structures of meaning and place that they are interacting with.

One particularly significant form of tourist performance is photography. Tourism and photography have been linked since the earliest days of both (Osborne, 2000). As Robinson and Picard (2009, p1) have put it, "to be a tourist, it would seem, involves taking

photographs". Larsen (2008, p142) defines tourist photography as "leisure picturing practices conducted away from home", aligning the travel and leisure aspects of tourism with the technical and recreational aspects of photography. Photography itself is a practice which can, through its familiarity and ordering focus, provide an anchor in the unfamiliarity of travel (Sontag, 1977). This has the double effect of not only structuring the practices of tourists in the places that they visit but also in framing the way in which they perceive and interact with those places (Robinson and Picard, 2009). The creativity and agency of tourists in the way they take photographs is something which has been much discussed. In their influential paper on the hermeneutics of tourist photography, Albers and James (1988, p136) identified that officially produced images in postcards and guidebooks become the pattern and standard for tourists, who attempt to authorise their own experience through reproducing them. However, Stylianou-Lambert (2012) has questioned the homogeneity of this, reflecting on the ways that individuals can represent their own identity and creative choices, as well as the reality of their visit, through the photographs they take; finding that whilst there is evidence of a hermeneutic cycle in landscape shots, portraits are much less structured.

Beyond the momentary performance of taking a photograph, the image itself is a form of souvenir (Sontag, 1977). Images taken during tourism become part of the materiality of travel narratives as well as allowing individuals to use their travel experiences in how they represent themselves to people around them (Crang, 1997; Robinson and Picard, 2009; Lo et al, 2011). Technological advancement in the last decade has transformed travel photography from something focused around cameras and printed images into a digital practice which no longer requires dedicated equipment and can be carried out using only a phone. This has had an interesting effect, with more recent research showing the collapsing

time depth of the use of photographs in tourist narratives, reflecting a change from the careful curation of images in family albums to the in-person sharing of images on the back of a camera, or the ability to load pictures instantaneously onto social media (Larsen, 2008; Lo et al, 2011; Konijn et al, 2016).

Although photography is an incredibly prevalent tourist activity it is not the only aspect of how tourists engage with places. Tourist destinations, while often focused on an 'extraordinary' element, are themselves often highly standardised and tourist behaviour frequently involves the overt performance of an individual's identity rather than that of their destination. Andrews (2006) provides an enlightening example of this in her study of package tourism in Mallorca, Spain, where the resort is characterised by its Britishness, reflecting the origin of the tourists rather than the host community. The more intimate social relationships of individual groups are also important. Bærenholdt et al (2004, p70) mention a particular variant of Urry's 'tourist gaze' concept which they call the 'family gaze', which is focused on the relationships of people within a family group than on the consumption of the place they are visiting. Other researchers have identified particular performances of tourism which revolve around both reminiscence and development of relationships with travelling partners (Bagnall, 2003; Bruner, 2005). These things may be performed in unfamiliar places but they relate intrinsically to the travellers themselves.

Tourist experiences of the destinations they visit are embodied; mediated through sensual encounters, sounds, smells, motion and touch (Crouch, 2002, pp64-65). In Jack and Phipps' (2005) study of tourism to the Isle of Skye, they describe many of the physical and emotional experiences common to tourism, ranging from the discomforts of a long drive in hot weather to the comforting familiarity of preparing food in a hostel kitchen, emphasising the physical

body of the tourist when moving through a place. Embodied experience is never purely physical, however. An important concept in relation to this is the idea of affect, the connection between the embodied encounter with a place and a person's internal response to it. This can range from an experience of profound emotion brought on through seeing a long anticipated sight (Picard, 2012), to a sense of safety and comfort brought on by a familiar and nostalgic environment (National Trust, 2017, p34).

The concept that we experience the world through embodied encounters with it is not unique to tourism. Ingold (2010, pp121-22) has written eloquently of the immanence of being in places using the illustration of Rosen and Oxenbury's (1989) children's story *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*. As we squelch and splash through the world around us we come to know it through these temperate and mobile encounters. However, tourist spaces are not necessarily the same as those encountered at home. The expectation of tourists is also a feature which differentiates embodied encounters with places through tourism from the everyday. Harrison (2002, p92) describes the individualised response to places conditioned through how a tourist perceives beauty or pleasure as "the tourist aesthetic". While this may heighten the emotional response a tourist has to a place, the management of tourist sites and the nature of modern tourism may also serve to deaden them. Edensor (2005, p95) has contrasted the way that industrial ruins are experienced in urban spaces to the much smoother movement apparent at tourist sites. This 'smoothness' reflects the way tourist destinations are managed to control tourists within them. Tourists also choose to mediate their own encounters with places through modern technology, as discussed by Pocock (2006) in her examination of how modern diving and camera equipment can stand between a tourist and their sensory experience of the Great Barrier Reef. Ultimately, as Robinson (2012a, p31) states, "whilst we may seek an aesthetic experience, our actual experience may be an anaesthetic one".

MacCannell (1999), one of the first scholars to consider tourism as a serious area for academic enquiry, posited that people in the modern [western] world had become disenchanted with the inauthenticity of modern life and, through tourism, were engaging in a quest to discover authenticity. He has subsequently emphasised that this is not necessarily the case for all tourists but the search for 'authentic' experiences is clearly significant for certain groups of people (MacCannell, 2011). Several studies which have focused on groups of tourists have continued to examine the idea of tourism as a form of quest or search, seeking perhaps not authenticity necessarily, but self-knowledge and identity (Harrison, 2002; Tucker, 2005; Gouthro and Palmer, 2011; Crossley, 2012). The difference of the destination, whether through its extraordinariness, its authenticity, or merely its distance from home, seems to facilitate these explorations. As heritage is itself so bound up with the attributes of authenticity and identity it is perhaps not surprising that heritage sites have so often become the focus for tourism. Heritage, as described above (see section 2.2.3), also contributes to the individual sense of place of a particular area, aiding in the identification of it as somewhere different.

2.3.3 Constructing destinations

In the first section of this chapter the ways in which heritage values are ascribed and used in the construction of place was examined. Often places layered with heritage values are, or become, tourist destinations. In the following paragraphs the ways in which tourist destinations are constructed will be similarly examined looking at ideas about tourist space and the formation of tourism imaginaries. Put simply, a tourist destination is a place that tourists visit. Destinations are at once created for tourists and created by them. Bærenholdt et al (2004, p10) describe how patterns of tourist behaviour transform a place into a touristic

place through what they call “sedimented mobilities”. Thus, while there are frequently numerous managers, businesses and strategists involved in the physical and imaginative construction of a destination, the tourists are also implicated in the ongoing co-construction of it (Bærenholdt et al, 2004). What this idea represents is that our experience of place is not just about the physical, it is an embodied, multi-sensory and imaginative encounter; what Crouch (2002, p168) calls “the material and the metaphorical”. Two common ways in which scholars have attempted to study the physical/not-physical, constructed for/constructed by nature of tourist destinations are the concepts of tourist space and tourism imaginaries.

Meethan (2001, p16) states that “tourism creates specific forms of social space”. These ‘tourist spaces’ are characterised by a quality of difference from ordinary places and where the performances of tourism can be carried out (Edensor, 1998; Meethan, 2001; Meethan, 2006). This is a crucial idea for this research, as it emphasises the potential for a single place to be experienced in multiple different ways. Lippard (1999, p2) hinted at something like this when she eloquently stated that “every place is both local and foreign”. Tourist spaces are a realm of perception; physical places located in time and space, but transformed by the imaginary (Meethan, 2006, Salazar and Graburn, 2014). Constantly in a cycle of construction and (re)construction, they form both the stage for performance and are created by it (Edensor, 1998; Tucker, 2005).

If space, and specifically tourist space, is an entanglement of deliberate production, physical reality and the re-imaginations of those within it, it provides a conceptual framework within which to examine the relationships between experience and place. The experience and construction of tourist space is influenced by the ways in which places are imagined and scholarship on tourism imaginaries is useful in understanding how tourist spaces come into

being. Chronis (2012, p1798) defines a tourism imaginary as "a social construct that envelops and shapes an otherwise unassuming physical space into an evocative tourism destination". Unlike personal imagination, imaginaries are shared across groups in society and draw on pre-existing stereotypes and memories as well as carefully constructed marketing images created by tourism professionals (Salazar and Graburn, 2014, Salazar, 2012). Chronis (2012, p1798) states that they exist "between place and story", which brings together the significance of the embodied and performed experience of place and the narratives that accompany it.

Imagination and narration are central parts of being a tourist and alongside the physical performances of tourism, they are deeply influential in tourists' experience of destination. Tourists are exposed to a huge volume of information and imagery about places and travel, which have a direct influence on the production of tourist space and its experience by the tourist (Edensor, 1998, Waterton, 2013). These join the broader realm of the imagination in what Bruner refers to as 'pretour' narratives (2005). These consist of all the preconceptions and expectations held by the traveller about the destination prior to the trip. They draw on the travellers' personal knowledge and memory, metanarratives about travel in general and on large socially constructed imaginaries of their destination. The anticipated experience and its associated narrative are transformed through the experience itself, and then reframed and worked upon after the trip has finished, creating new conceptions and understandings (Bruner, 2005).

MacCannell (2011), however, has argued that imaginaries can form a barrier between visitors and the attractions they visit. Pocock's (2006) work on tourist experiences of the Great Barrier Reef supports this, revealing that the power of the technologically mediated

images that we share imaginatively about the Reef, while often actually beyond the capability of the human eye to perceive, remain in the forefront for visitors' even after they have had their own diving experience. Tourists themselves contribute to the ongoing construction of these imaginaries. As tourist narratives are expressed publicly, they become part of the reproduction of the place itself, adding to the work of industry professionals, writers, journalists and marketing specialists (Edensor, 1998, Gretzel and Fesenmaier, 2009). Narratives, or stories, tie together places and performances; the act of telling them an integral act in the ongoing reconstruction of tourism imaginaries (Chronis, 2012). Whether they travel at home or abroad, tourists change both their destination and, potentially, themselves through their presence (Lippard, 1999).

Like heritage, tourism has been identified as potentially of great significance in the ways that people form social and individual identities. There have been a number of studies which have identified tourism as a significant practice in this, and while choosing to travel, selecting the destination, and crafting stories about it upon return are a part of this, the journey itself is particularly significant. Harrison (2002) studied individuals who travelled extensively and for whom travel formed a central part of how they perceived themselves and the world. She identified the significance of visiting places as part of a process of personal worldmaking; transforming locations from places to visit to places that have been visited on metaphorical, and often physical, maps of the world (Harrison, 2002). Similarly, Desforges (2000) and Tucker (2005), in their respective studies of tourists undertaking long-haul journeys and those on coach trips in New Zealand, identify travel as a significant element in both the active creation of self-identity, particularly in younger people and in the confirmation or reconstruction of identity in older people.

2.4 World Heritage

2.4.1 What World Heritage is

In 1972, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) adopted the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (UNESCO, 1972). Now in its fifth decade, the Convention has become one of the world's most successful intergovernmental agreements, ratified by 193 States Parties and with 1092 sites, referred to as 'properties', inscribed on the World Heritage List at the time of writing (Pocock, 1997; UNESCO, no date-a; UNESCO, no date-b). The List is an inventory of sites considered to be of globally significant cultural and natural heritage, created as a result of the Convention. Currently 167 States Parties have entries inscribed on the List (UNESCO, no date-a). World Heritage Sites are a specific kind of heritage place and are particularly attractive to tourists. It can be argued that they are the epitome of the AHD as places elevated to global significance by a major intergovernmental treaty (Smith, 2006; Waterton, 2010). They are highly managed and mediated places and, thus, particularly interesting in relation to heritage production and for the study of how tourists interact with such places.

The Convention was written with the intent of fostering international co-operation to work towards the conservation of cultural and natural heritage (UNESCO, 1972). According to Rodwell (2012), this was initially conceived more as a 'Red Cross' for heritage, but over time the Convention has grown into a more explicitly moral cause, based on the principle that the heritage, both natural and cultural, is part of the shared inheritance of all humanity and, as a result, requires the efforts of all people to preserve and protect it. In this it is possible to trace the echoes of what has been discussed above; the discourse of heritage as a shared

inheritance requiring conservation, a key component in Smith's (2006) conception of the AHD, both giving justification for and authorising the work of heritage professionals as necessary 'experts'.

World Heritage, it has been argued, may also have a powerful symbolic and world-making ability, altering the way in which people around the world relate to each other and to places around the planet (Brumann, 2014). Whether this was the intention of the Convention or not, Di Giovine (2009) has argued that the work of creating the List is a key activity in bringing about UNESCO's founding agenda, to bring about peace "in the minds of men" through building worldwide solidarity with cultural diversity at its heart, rather than being something which creates barriers between people (UNESCO, 1945, preamble to UNESCO Constitution). To this end Di Giovine (2009, p33) argues that UNESCO, through the Convention, has created an "imagined community" (after Anderson, 2006), a new sort of place he calls the "heritage-scape", for which the most important monumental sites, the focus of ritual activities in this realm, are World Heritage Sites. World Heritage Sites, in this view, are not just individual places, but elements of a transnational shared 'space', an altered perception of how the world is ordered and experienced. These properties are icons, in effect, of a culture typified by its variation rather than its similarity.

2.4.2 World Heritage value

The central premise of the Convention is that there are some places which are so special that they form a collective inheritance for all humanity, a co-ownership that engenders a need for co-responsibility. This premise is outlined in the preamble to the Convention text, which states "that parts of the cultural or natural heritage are of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole" (UNESCO, 1972).

This premise is expressed through the concept of Outstanding Universal Value, the characteristic which defines such places and which is required for a site to be included on the List (UNESCO, 1972, articles 1, 2 and 11). The Convention text does not define OUV, although the term is used ten times across the preamble and articles (UNESCO, 1972, Cameron, 2005). The most recently produced Operational Guidelines state that:

> Outstanding Universal Value means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity (UNESCO WHC, 2017, p19).

This definition includes two interrelated but separate themes. The first of these is 'universal' value, which Jokilehto (1999) identifies as the founding principle of the Convention: a quality which makes something part of a heritage shared by all humanity. This is separate, although related, to the 'outstanding' element of the concept, which indicates an assessment of the exceptional worth of a particular part of this shared heritage. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006, p186, italics original) notes that this means that sites not only have to be "*distinctive* but also *distinguished*".

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), one of the three expert bodies which advise UNESCO on WHS, presented a paper to a special expert meeting on OUV in 2005. In this paper it was stated that sites of Outstanding Universal Value were those which we, as humanity, not only share collectively as part of our heritage, but additionally wish to pass on to future generations, drawing the identification of WHS back to the conservation ethos enshrined in the Convention (ICOMOS, 2005). OUV fits neatly with the principles of the AHD, as discussed above, implying that heritage values are self-evident, universally relevant and requiring conservation for future generations. People encountering a WHS are expected to be affected by these outstanding and universal values,

which encourage respect, awe and a collective awareness of the significance of this place on a global scale. The reality is, unsurprisingly, rather less clear. While many local communities believe strongly that 'their' heritage is of world significance there is considerably less evidence that tourists, or even all those living locally, are aware of the status, never mind being deeply affected by it (e.g. Smith, 2002). Nevertheless, if personal connections to heritage are a fundamental part of how people engage with places during travel, the notion of universally shared values may facilitate tourist engagement with WHS, regardless of the objective validity of the concept. Tourists are at least as likely as any other group to be influenced by the powerful discourses of AHD and UNESCO's metanarrative of World Heritage, and may in fact be more receptive to these discourses due to the highly mediated nature of tourism.

The emergence of the concept of the social value of heritage, discussed above, has led to a shift towards recognising the importance of the values held more commonly about places and practices. This can be seen in the UNESCO (2003) *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* and in an increased dialogue on the significance of communities in relation to World Heritage Sites, culminating in the addition of a fifth 'C' for 'community' (UNESCO WHC, 2007). However, the social values of World Heritage Sites are rarely included in Statements of Outstanding Universal Value, implying a two-tier system of valuation which retains the primacy of the expert. As a result a WHS may have many values but those described in the SOUV will not be the sum of them and may in fact reflect the values of a place at the moment of inscription, rather than the values it is currently ascribed. This creates a significant tension in the communication of values at WHS and the ways in which people, including tourists, relate to and negotiate these values.

While not specifically relating to a World Heritage context, the ICOMOS *Ename Charter for the Interpretation of Cultural Heritage Sites* makes clear that the communication of the things which are important about a place are fundamental to the interpretation of it. It also emphasises that the communication of these things, these values, is something that should involve communities and other stakeholders and not just experts (ICOMOS, 2008, Objective 6). Reading into this charter it is possible to conclude that the communication of values through heritage interpretation is not just a way of transmitting to visitors the significance of the place and thus, the reasons for its continued preservation and conservation, but also to reinforce this amongst those involved in its management or living in its surroundings.

More particularly in relation to the values of World Heritage Sites, the World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Programme identifies two specific ways in which values are central to communication at properties considered to possess OUV. The first is that visitors to sites should gain an understanding and appreciation of OUV, not just in relation to the site they are visiting, but as a concept which brings with it a duty of "responsible behaviour" (UNESCO WHC, 2012, p5). The second aspect is more subtle. The text identifies not just OUV, but also a wider set of values drawn from the Convention, relating to conservation and preservation. Through developing awareness and appreciation of these values across governments, managers, communities and tourism stakeholders, it is argued that "a new paradigm" will be brought about (UNESCO WHC, 2012, pp2, 4). Values are clearly something which are considered to have a powerful effect, both in justifying the identification of something as heritage and giving reason for people to visit and engage with it, as well as changing the way they understand and interact with heritage more generally.

2.4.3 World Heritage and tourism

Regardless of the transformational, or otherwise, effect of OUV, tourists do often visit WHS and indeed, are both a major audience for, and co-producers of, these sites (Gravari-Barbas et al, 2017). Francesco Bandarin (2002, p3), at the time the Director of the World Heritage Centre, described the flow of tourists to WHS as "an inevitable destiny", considering that the OUV of a property, the identification of which formed the justification for its inclusion on the List, to be one of the reasons it is attractive to tourists in the first place. There is a widely held assumption that inscription on the List will result in an increase in visitor numbers. However, the reality of these effects is less clear. In 2007, PriceWaterhouse Coopers were commissioned to attempt to quantify exactly what the costs and benefits of inscription are and, while they suggested that World Heritage status would have a 'branding effect' this was likely to be extremely limited in terms of increased visitor numbers which they estimated at c.0-3% (PWC, 2007, p5). Several academic studies have also been made, particularly Buckley (2004), who similarly cast doubt on the reality of increased visitor numbers associated with inscription.

A number of studies considering the positive effects of World Heritage Listing on tourism have focused on the way that the status can act as a globally recognised brand indicating that the site is of a particular quality (e.g. Rodger, 2007; Ryan and Silvanto, 2009; Rodwell, 2012; King and Halfpenny, 2014). However, the actual reality of this has been widely questioned. Hall and Piggin (2001) carried out a quantitative study in 1998 which looked at whether WHSs in OECD countries actively promoted the status of the site or explained the reasons for the site's inscription. Their research showed that 37% of the WHSs surveyed did not mention the status in their marketing and less than 50% had interpretation about why the

site was on the List (Hall and Piggin, 2001, p103). Further, other studies have found that visitors are often either unaware of the World Heritage status of sites they are visiting, or do not understand it. For example, Smith (2002), McClanahan (2007) and Dewar et al (2012), who looked, respectively, at visitor motivations and knowledge of World Heritage status at Maritime Greenwich, the Heart of Neolithic Orkney and the Historic Centre of Macao, found that that visitors were often unaware of, and unconcerned with, the World Heritage status of the site. Indeed, a detailed study carried out by Poria et al (2011) in Israel found that only 38% of tourists actually knew what the title 'World Heritage Site' meant, and that the status did not have a significant effect on potential visitor consumer behavior. Visitor awareness of World Heritage status seems to vary a lot between sites; Moscardo et al (2001) found high levels of visitor knowledge about the status of the Great Barrier Reef, whilst King and Halfpenny (2014), in contrast, found low levels amongst visitors to natural WHSs in North Queensland, Australia and Hawaii, something they considered to be a failure of communication. Even when awareness was high, as in the case of the Great Barrier Reef, understanding of the nature of the status was much more mixed, with Moscardo et al (2001) reporting that many assumed the status related to environmental protection rather than as a recognition of significance.

One concept which has been a focus for research is the idea that there are a specific sub-category of heritage tourists who can be considered as 'World Heritage tourists'. In a study of Australian World Heritage Areas, King and Prideaux (2010, p244) found that 13% of visitors considered themselves to be 'collectors' of WHSs. This result was based on the authors directly asking people visiting WHSs if they self-identified in this way. Adie and Hall (2017) took a different approach to this issue by looking at the overall demographics of visitors at three WHSs. They identified that, while they found no significant differences

between visitors to WHSs and general heritage tourists in terms of gender or education, there were noticeable differences in relation to the origin of these tourists, specifically finding a higher percentage of Europeans (Adie and Hall, 2017, p78). This study looked at Independence Hall (USA), Volubilis (Morocco) and Studenica Monastery (Serbia). All of these sites relate directly to the history of Europe, through the Roman and British Empires or through Christianity as well as being located in popular countries for European tourists and being located in destinations attractive to Europeans through either proximity or culture. Despite the limitations in this study, the tentative conclusion that World Heritage may be of greater significance to European tourists has been used as a certainty in subsequent research (e.g. Ramires et al, 2018).

In the context of all of this it is worth considering exactly how the discourse of World Heritage relates to tourism. The focus is often on the threats posed to the values and authenticity of properties, or on the economic potential of tourism for protection of the site and promoting sustainable development in the area. Tourism is only referred to once in the text of the Convention and it is in relation to threats of a magnitude to potentially place a site on the List of World Heritage in Danger (UNESCO, 1972, article 11.4). This trend has continued through the majority of further publications from the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, with even the most recent Operational Guidelines including only very brief mention of tourism, still with predominantly negative connotations relating to development pressures, and in the discussion of the (in)appropriate use of the World Heritage emblem on tourist souvenirs (UNESCO WHC, 2017). However, there may be a more positive attitude to tourism inherent within the discourse of World Heritage. Di Giovine (2009) considers tourists to be an essential part of the imagined community created and maintained through the discourse of World Heritage. A more practical example of this,

in keeping with this conceptualisation of tourism contributing to the moral cause of UNESCO, is the use of tourism to WHSs to support the UN's sustainable development agenda (UNESCO WHC, 2012; Gravari-Barbas et al, 2015).

Merely visiting is not evidence that tourists are engaging meaningfully with the OUVs of WHSs, which is where these ideas of tourism supporting the wider work of UNESCO may face problems. While it is certainly the case that tourists are frequently drawn to 'outstanding' sites, one need only briefly glance through a guide book to see attractions identified as 'the first', 'the biggest' or 'the only', there is less evidence that they are drawn to the universal, the shared human ownership of particularly significant places, which is so important to the concept of World Heritage. In a study of how World Heritage is included in travel guidebooks Beck (2006, pp525, 529) found that the status of sites was inconsistently mentioned and generally not in the context of global value. The ways in which tourists actually encounter the values of these places must, therefore, be considered in more detail.

While 'tourism' itself is barely included in the Convention, the same cannot be said for 'communication'. Article 27 of the Convention, which, along with article 28, relates to educational programmes, states that:

> States Parties to this Convention shall endeavour by all appropriate means, and in particular by educational and information programmes, to strengthen appreciation and respect by their peoples of the cultural and natural heritage (UNESCO, 1972, article 27).

While this relates to the communication of World Heritage by States Parties in general, rather than a specific direction given to those managing individual properties, this is an indication that, from the outset, there has been a concern that the values of World Heritage and WHSs are communicated and understood by as many people as possible. The Budapest Declaration

(UNESCO WHC, 2002), outlines a number of strategic objectives, which with the addition of a fifth objective focusing on communities, are now known as 'the 5 C's' (UNESCO WHC, 2007). The fourth objective is to "increase public awareness, involvement and support for World Heritage through Communication" (UNESCO WHC, 2002, article 4(c)). This theme is expanded on in the "awareness-raising and education" section of the Operational Guidelines. This states that States Parties should develop "activities aimed at raising public awareness of the Convention and informing the public of the dangers threatening World Heritage" (UNESCO WHC, 2017, VI.C, para 218), and that they should also "ensure that World Heritage status is adequately marked and promoted on-site" (UNESCO WHC, 2017, VI.C, para 217).

In spite of this, the ways in the communication of both the status, significance and values of WHSs can be achieved are less clear. Studies by Renwick (2017), Bell (2010) and Cutler et al (2015) examining how visitors engage with the WHSs they are visiting, have all emphasised the personal interactions between visitors and place rather than intellectual ones. This is particularly apparent in Palau-Saumell et al's (2012) research at La Sagrada Família, Barcelona, which showed that while World Heritage status was not fundamental for attracting tourists it did have a significant effect on the level of emotional response amongst visitors. Others have shown that there are inherent issues in the nature of the World Heritage approach to value, in particular the potentially deep divides in how people perceive the supposedly 'universal' aspects of a site's value which has led to contradiction and even violence and disenfranchisement (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006; Rakic and Chambers, 2008; Tucker and Carnegie, 2014).

Even where these divides are less deeply contested there may be very different things valued by visitors than those things for which a place is inscribed. In their work on the Norwegian mining town of Røros, Guttormsen and Fageraas (2011) describe the role of 'attractive authenticity', referring to the ways in which tourists value the nostalgic aesthetic of the town rather than its industrial history. The forms and valorisation of heritage which tourists engage with may not conform to those things identified as its OUV, making it so important for investigations of tourist encounters with WHS to go beyond awareness of the status or numbers of visitors.

2.5 Previous studies in Ironbridge Gorge

In this chapter I have discussed a wide range of studies which have focused on heritage, value, tourism and World Heritage. In this final section I want to consider work carried out on tourism to Ironbridge Gorge, the site which forms the case study for this thesis. As a place of considerable historic interest there has been much work carried out on the history of the area and its industries. The historical background and context of this research is the focus of Chapter 3 but there is an important point to consider in terms of how this body of work relates to the World Heritage values of Ironbridge Gorge and how they are communicated to tourists. Research carried out into the industrial history of Ironbridge Gorge has not been conducted in a vacuum; it was undertaken in the context of the concerted conservation efforts and destination building activities which transformed Ironbridge Gorge from a dilapidated, deindustrialised landscape into a popular tourist attraction. Indeed, one of the principal historians, Barrie Trinder, was part of IGMT's Executive Board and his books were, and still are, sold in the museum gift shops (Beale, 2014, 42). The success of IGMT in the 1970s no doubt contributed to the decision to include it among the group of sites which became the

UK's first nominations to the World Heritage List in 1986 (see section 3.2.3). The research which had been carried out in the area in the preceding decades, in particular the work published by Alfrey and Clark (1993), helped lay the foundations for how the site's OUV was to be formulated.

There have been a number of studies made of the history of Ironbridge Gorge in this important gestational period. Beale's (2014) commissioned company history of the work of IGMT and de Soisssons' (1991) history of Telford New Town are both written in a very positive light, documenting the work carried out to transform Telford and Ironbridge Gorge from the deindustrialised landscape of the 1950s and '60s into prosperous communities. The more recent events in Ironbridge Gorge have also found their way into histories which focus on earlier periods, forming the chronological end of their narratives (e.g. Raistrick, 1989; Trinder, 1988). White and Devlin (2007) and White (2016) have reviewed the use of heritage in the redevelopment of the area in a critical way, examining the ways in which the industrial heritage of Ironbridge Gorge has been commodified and capitalised on over the last few decades. There are also numerous in-house documents held within the Ironbridge Archives which give accounts of particular periods in the development of the area. However, while histories of tourism form a part of these works, it is not their focus. In Chapter 3 many of these texts are used to piece together a history of the development of tourism to Ironbridge Gorge, with additional archival materials used to fill in some of these gaps.

The tourist-facing organisations in Ironbridge Gorge and the wider area have carried out numerous visitor surveys over the last few decades. These have focused on visitor motivation and demographics, with the specific interests of the commissioning organisation dictating the geographic focus (see section 3.2.3). In 2008 a substantial piece of research was

commissioned from PLB Consulting on behalf of the WHS Site Steering Group. This included a study of the nature of tourism to the area, key markets, visitor motivation and an emotional access audit. Beyond these commercial investigations the Gorge has also been a focus for academic research. In a study of how visitors experience heritage, examining commodification and authenticity, Goulding (2000) used Blists Hill Victorian Town museum in Ironbridge Gorge as a case study. This included carrying out a number of interviews with visitors to examine their experiences and attitudes to the past. This was not the first time Blists Hill had been used as a focus for study, with Goulding's (2000) work following in the footsteps of Beeho and Prentice's (1995) work on visitor experiences there. While both the commercial and academic research is interesting none of them have looked at the way that visitors actually engage with Ironbridge Gorge as a WHS, particularly as a landscape as a whole and have frequently focused on the museum sites. One of the strengths of this thesis is that, due to the lack of commercial and time constraints, I have been able to take a wider view of tourism to Ironbridge Gorge, focusing on the broader experience of tourists to it as a whole rather than on any individual element of it. Further, this research specifically focuses on the World Heritage values of Ironbridge Gorge in relation to tourism. When considered at all, World Heritage is usually looked at in relation to tourist awareness and appreciation of the status rather than on its broader implications, something which this thesis attempts to address.

World Heritage has rarely featured in research directly carried out on Ironbridge Gorge, despite being used in a number of desk-based studies comparing multiple sites. Beck's (2006) survey of the treatment of World Heritage status in travel guidebooks included Ironbridge Gorge as one of the sites used for the measurement and it was one of six sites compared by Landorf (2009) in a comparison of WHS management plans. In both cases the

authors refer to the long period of time Ironbridge Gorge has been inscribed on the List as a contributing factor in its inclusion in their studies, which is interesting as it so rarely features in work actually carried out within the Gorge. This reflects the large apparent gap between how World Heritage is often perceived when studied at a macro-level and the reality of how many sites are experienced on the ground, at least in the UK where World Heritage status has made less impact in the national imagination (Rodwell, 2012).

Finally, it should be noted that this thesis represents one quarter of a wider project on the 'Communication of World Heritage Values' which includes work on the local community (Trelka, 2018), educational groups (Davies, 2018) and specialists in industrial heritage (Raine, forthcoming). As a whole, these four elements provide an unusually deep examination of the communication of value within a World Heritage Site, being able to examine these multiple communities of interest.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has laid out the research and ideas which form the theoretical framework for this thesis. This investigation of the communication of World Heritage values to tourists in Ironbridge Gorge draws on strands of work from studies of tourism, heritage and World Heritage. In this chapter the complexities of both heritage and tourism have been shown, which has highlighted the comparative lack of variety which has often been found in studies of World Heritage Sites. Assumptions about heritage, place and tourist experience of those places are applied to World Heritage in ways that would be problematised in the wider disciplines. In addition to highlighting the need to draw on work from a range of fields this chapter has also examined a number of central themes. These are the nature and creation of

value, the construction of place, and the ways in which tourists encounter and experience heritage and tourist destinations.

The ascription of heritage value and the construction of places as tourist destinations are closely related. It has been shown above how heritage is an important resource in the selection and creation of places designed for tourist consumption and it has also been discussed how heritage values are ascribed through ongoing processes of valorisation which can include the performances of tourists in relation to them. Thus, there is an apparent cycle between people, value and place. In this thesis the ways in which this has happened, and continues to happen, at Ironbridge Gorge will be examined, first through the history of its development as a destination (Chapter 3), the ways in which World Heritage features in its construction as a destination (Chapter 5) and the performances of the tourists who visit it (Chapter 6). This will address the gap in current research on World Heritage relating to how the officially designated OUV of a place is translated to tourists, if indeed it is at all, and how tourists' ongoing performances affect the communication of these values.

One particularly significant feature in the ways that places, value and tourist behaviour are shaped is the power of official bodies and their discourse. In this chapter, Smith's (2006) concept of the 'Authorized Heritage Discourse' has been discussed in relation to the construction of heritage, particularly as seen in action in the work of the World Heritage Convention. Tourism has also been shown to be a set of practices heavily influenced by both overt forces, such as site infrastructure and surveillance, guides, travel agents and reps, and more subtle pressures including learned patterns of behaviour and the pressure of advertising and the gaze of other tourists. At World Heritage Sites visited by tourists there is the combination of heritage discourse and the pressures exerted on tourists to conform to

particular behaviours influencing the ways that visitors are able to encounter the site and its values. In the following chapters these themes will be drawn out and analysed in more detail alongside the new research presented in this thesis.

CHAPTER 3

BECOMING AND BEING IRONBRIDGE GORGE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

3.1 Introduction

Ironbridge Gorge has been a tourist attraction since the mid-eighteenth century when wealthy visitors came to marvel at the spectacle of the industrial works and learn about the new technologies being developed here (Trinder, 1988). While the decline of the industries in the area was mirrored in the decline of its popularity as a destination, there is evidence that Ironbridge Gorge has gone through a number of stages, reinventing itself from industrial sublime to nostalgic countryside, and then to globally significant heritage site. These phases of evolution have created the context within which the modern heritage attraction is encountered and managed. This chapter will explore how the site evolved into its current form as well as the ways in which it is managed and represented to visitors today. The first section will explore the history of the site through the stages of becoming the Ironbridge Gorge (c.1600-1950), becoming a heritage attraction (c.1950-1986) and becoming World Heritage (1986 to the present). The second section examines the current context for the management of the site, first looking at the different spheres within which the site is managed and tourism to it is promoted, and then looking at how evidence of this management can be seen through how the site is represented to tourists both on-site and online. The chapter concludes with a reflection on how the past and present management of the site has created a complex landscape with many different spaces within it.

3.2 The history of Ironbridge Gorge

3.2.1 Becoming Ironbridge Gorge

The area of East Shropshire where the River Severn drops into a steep sided gorge and where the village of Ironbridge is located today has long been a place of industry. Coal, clay, iron ore and limestone can all be quarried from the ground here and the woodlands which cover the valley sides have been managed and exploited for centuries (Trinder, 2016). The tributaries of the River Severn have been harnessed for water power and the river itself used to transport materials southwards to Bristol (Alfrey and Clark, 1993, p31; Gadsden, c1990, p104). The sides of the Gorge are cut through geological strata making the coal and other minerals relatively easy to mine, a factor that contributed to the area becoming a nationally significant mining centre by the sixteenth century (Alfrey and Clark, 1993, p14; Hayman and Horton, 1999). In 1708, a Quaker entrepreneur named Abraham Darby (later Abraham Darby I) leased a blast furnace in Coalbrookdale, one of the tributary valleys of the Severn Gorge. One year later he achieved something never previously done before by smelting iron using coke as fuel rather than charcoal, an innovation which would allow iron to be cheaply mass produced in the quantities required for the growth of industry in the following centuries (Alfrey and Clark, 1993, pp1, 19). This innovation is credited as being one of the most significant events in the history of the Industrial Revolution and the justification behind the claim that Ironbridge Gorge is 'the birthplace of industry'. This is one of the central features of Ironbridge Gorge's SOUV and the Old Furnace, where this innovation took place, is one of the two key monuments of the WHS (UNESCO, no date-c, n.p.).

As well as the 'birthplace', Ironbridge Gorge has been referred to as the 'cradle of the Industrial Revolution' (Alfrey and Clark, 1993, p1), emphasising that the developments

which took place in this area in the eighteenth century went beyond a single moment of invention. In that century the Ironbridge Gorge became synonymous with innovation, leading Hayman and Horton (1999, p9) to describe it as "the Silicon Valley of its day". The list of 'world firsts' from Ironbridge Gorge is lengthy: the iron boat, iron rails, iron wheels, Trevithick's steam locomotive and the eponymous Iron Bridge were all created here (Alfrey and Clark, 1993, p1; IGMT, 1981, p1). Today the feature of the area which has undoubtedly become the most well-known aspect is the Iron Bridge, which gave its name to the village that grew next to it and thence to the wider area of the Severn Gorge that it is located in. The Bridge was built from the designs of Shrewsbury architect Thomas Farnolls Pritchard and was believed at the time to be the world's first iron bridge, a superlative engineering project amongst a host of other innovations and inventions (Cossons and Trinder, 2002). In large lettering on the Bridge is proclaimed "this bridge was cast in Coalbrookdale" indicating its powerful role as an advert for the ironmasters of the Severn Gorge and a testament to the belief that anything could be built in iron (Cossons and Trinder, 2002).

Figure 3.1 shows the painting *An Afternoon View of Coalbrookdale* by William Williams (1777), which depicts a small party of wealthy visitors looking down towards the Old Furnace. The painting shows Darby's Old Furnace in the centre of the image with the furnace pools and coke hearths surrounded by peaceful woodlands and farmland. Throughout the preceding decades Ironbridge Gorge had been becoming increasingly popular as a place to visit. Initially the visitors were largely specialists, scientists and spies who were interested in learning about the new techniques being developed in the Gorge and meeting with and discussing ideas with the ironmasters there (Trinder, 1988). Visiting the Gorge rapidly developed into something that was done for its own sake rather than for exclusively practical reasons, showing the evolution of its image as a place attractive to tourists. For visitors the

natural scenery of the Gorge was combined with the spectacle of the industrial works in a way that was quite different to other places they might have visited at that time. This is shown in the description given by George Perry in an account written in a prospectus of the two earliest published views of Coalbrookdale:

> The Beauty of the scene is in the meantime greatly increase'd by a near view of the Dale self, Pillars of Flame and smoke rising to vast height, large Reservoirs of Water, and a number of Engines in motion, never fail to raise the admiration of strangers (quoted in Trinder, 1988, p24).

Figure 3.1: *An Afternoon View of Coalbrookdale*, William Williams, 1777 (Courtesy of Shropshire Council: Shropshire Museums)

Abraham Darby I's grandson, Abraham Darby III, the man generally credited as being the driving force in the Iron Bridge's construction both in terms of effort and finance, was

instrumental in generating touristic interest in the Bridge (Cossons and Trinder, 2002). He commissioned artists to paint it and had the art works engraved allowing them to be spread around the world (Trinder, 1981, Cossons and Trinder, 2002). The energetic promotion of the Bridge contributed to its rapid development as a destination for wealthy travellers in search of the curious and the spectacular. Visitor interest in the Bridge was a key stimulating factor in the growth of the village of Ironbridge (Hayman and Horton, 1999). While today Shropshire is a relatively remote part of England it was well connected in the late eighteenth century, located on the route between London and North Wales and then to Ireland (Cossons and Trinder, 2002). The Bridge became a feature in advertising for businesses in the area, although travellers also describe observing many of the other industrial features such as the Tar Tunnel and the Inclined Plane, as well as enjoying the natural landscape of the Gorge (Trinder, 1988).

While people continued to visit the Gorge in the early part of the nineteenth century the popularity of Ironbridge Gorge as a destination declined in line with the diminishment of its industrial significance (Alfrey and Clark, 1993, p11; Cossons and Trinder, 2002). The iron industry in the area could not compete with producers in other parts of the country, although ironmaking of some kind only came to an end in the Gorge in 2017 (BBC, 2017a). The gap created by the decline of the iron industry allowed the manufacture of tiles, tobacco pipes and decorative ceramics to flourish. Pottery production created large scree piles of waste which added to the effects of the loss of prestige in the area by damaging the scenic qualities of the Gorge admired by many visitors in previous decades (Cossons and Trinder, 2002). In spite of this people still visited the Gorge. It is known that Thomas Wilson, the landlord of an inn at Hodge Bower on the northern side of the valley, was bringing groups of visitors to the area (Trinder, 1988). Victorian photographs show that the area was not so spoilt by

abandoned industry as might be thought, with people shown having picnics or enjoying a funfair in the ruins of Bedlam Furnace (Powell, 2009).

Towner (1995, p339) has written about how the everyday and ordinary excursions and holidays of working class people are often excluded from histories of tourism, which tend to focus on the Grand Tour, organised travel groups and the development of resorts. These travel experiences are no less important and it seems that Ironbridge Gorge may have continued to be a destination for visitors throughout this period of declining industrial fame. The end of the nineteenth century saw the growth of the countryside as a destination for the emerging middle classes. This combined recreational pursuits such as golfing and cycling alongside an increasing nostalgia for the pre-industrial era which was associated with rural areas (Towner, 1996). The same period also saw the development of working class mass tourism which, it has been argued, was very much about the creation and building of community (Chambers, 2000). In Ironbridge Gorge there was clearly a shift in the profile of visitors, with the wealthy elite no longer favouring it as a destination of choice. However, it does appear that small-scale tourism was still happening. The excursions organised by Thomas Wilson at Hodge Bower are evidence of this.

In the first part of the twentieth century there are also materials showing that people were continuing to visit Ironbridge Gorge, albeit perhaps in relatively small numbers. In a 1928 brochure Thomas Cook included Ironbridge Gorge in an inclusive day trip package of train tickets, meals and a "motor drive" (Thomas Cook, 1928, p37). More detailed information was included in a 1946 brochure, which listed Coalbrookdale as an inland resort:

> "The cradle of the iron trade," as this quiet village has been called, may not suggest holiday attractions, yet it has many. The river Severn flows through the dale, from which rise densely-wooded hills, and the Severn offers fine sport for

> anglers. The countryside appeals to enthusiastic walkers. There is a beautiful garden here, with a bowling green. Golf near by (Thomas Cook, 1946, p17).

In 1951 *A Shell Guide: Shropshire* was published (Piper and Betjeman, 1951). The guide featured the eighteenth century engraving of the Iron Bridge by Michael Angelo Rooker (Ellis after Rooker, 1782) on the cover and included entries for Coalbrookdale, Coalport, Ironbridge and Jackfield in its gazeteer (Piper and Betjeman, 1951). The Shell Guide describes the area as "this oddly beautiful gorge" and stated that it "seems like the Rhine and the steep wooded banks are stuck with chimneys and deserted brick kilns" (Piper and Betjeman, 1951, p33). The Iron Bridge itself was described as being the "first iron bridge in England, very complicated and elegant", while Coalbrookdale was noted as the "cradle of the iron industry" (Piper and Betjeman, 1951, pp25, 33). Tourism to the Gorge between the late nineteenth century and middle of the twentieth century may have been relatively small scale but it was still happening.

One particular group who certainly continued to visit the area between the end of the nineteenth century and the end of the Second World War were those interested in the history of industry. One of the groups hosted by Thomas Wilson at Hodge Bower was a group of 350 workmen and friends from Whitehouse and Co. Limited, Globe Tube Works of Wednesbury who had travelled by a specially provided train. An account of a visit, which was in July 1877, records that:

> the afternoon was spent by the company in visiting Buildwas Abbey, the Iron Bridge, Wrekin, Messrs. Maws' Works, Mr. Southhorn's Pipe Works, Benthall Edge, the Rotunda, Limestone Caverns & Co (quoted in Trinder, 1988, p122).

During the Second World War L.T.C. Rolt, an engineering historian and biographer, visited the Gorge and was fascinated to observe technology obsolete elsewhere still in use, seeing a positive in what would usually have been seen as a detraction (Trinder, 1988). It is clear that,

for the initiated eye at least, there was still something about Ironbridge Gorge which was identifiable as different. He wrote that he "needed no recital of historical facts to tell [me] that it was here that it had all begun" (quoted in Trinder, 1988, p127). The idea of Ironbridge Gorge as somewhere special, the 'birthplace' of a movement which changed Britain and the world, had begun to emerge and it was the industrial enthusiasts who were to be at the centre of its restoration.

3.2.2 Becoming heritage

Between 1947 and 1985 Ironbridge Gorge re-emerged into national consciousness as a place of special significance. This did not happen by chance and the following section briefly examines the developments in the area which brought this about through the establishment of an internationally known group of museums. These developments were to be vitally significant in the selection of Ironbridge Gorge as one of the first UK sites to be nominated to the List. Crucially this period represents the change from Ironbridge Gorge as a landscape of industry and occasional leisure to one focused primarily on tourism and recreation. Ironbridge Gorge is unusual, not only in being one of the earliest places in the country to see significant industrialisation, but also in that it saw very early decline in those industries. This resulted in a high level of survival in remains of eighteenth century industrial features which, elsewhere, were cleared for the development of the larger scale industries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Cossons, 1973). As a result, it featured prominently in the discussions about the newly emerging concept of industrial archaeology, a term first used in a paper by Michael Rix (1955) where he used Ironbridge Gorge as an example of the significance of the subject.

This change in how industrial archaeological remains were being perceived came at just the right time for the Old Furnace in Coalbrookdale. The then owners, Allied Ironfounders, changed their plan to clear the area and instead decided to make it the focal point around which to organise the company's 1959 celebrations of the 250th anniversary of Darby's establishment of the Coalbrookdale Company (Raistrick, 1989). It was decided that the Old Furnace should be fully excavated and conserved and a Museum of Iron and Iron Founding opened close by (Raistrick, 1989). The opening of the museum can be seen as a significant moment in the history of Ironbridge Gorge. It had been internationally famous as a centre of innovation and the marvels of the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but had largely fallen out of the consideration of all but those with a specialist interest in the history of industry. The opening of a museum marks a moment when the smaller number of individuals convinced of the significance of Ironbridge Gorge began to communicate this to the public in general.

The development of Ironbridge Gorge might have remained on a similar course to many other historically significant but largely underdeveloped areas, housing a small museum of local and specialist interest but attracting little attention, had it not been for other major events unfolding in the region. Ironbridge Gorge was only a small part of the much larger East Shropshire Coalfield area and the deindustrialisation of the region in the mid-twentieth century had led to a need for substantial regeneration in order to improve the habitability of the area and create jobs (White, 2016). It was in this context that it was decided to investigate the possibility of creating a New Town in order to provide relief for overcrowding in the West Midlands (de Soissons, 1991). This New Town would clear or stabilise the heavily contaminated remains of the coalfield and its industries and create in their place modern residential accommodation.

The Master Plan for the New Town designated the area of Ironbridge Gorge to be reserved as an area of 'high amenity' (de Soissons, 1991). This is an important development as the plans for the New Town were being drawn up in the early 1960s, several years before the *Civic Amenities Act* (Parliament, House of Commons, 1967) led to the creation of Conservation Areas, which are designated for the preservation of historic features. Designating the Ironbridge Gorge as an area for amenity usage was the tool which existed at the time for protecting the archaeological features of the area from redevelopment but it also acted to set the context within which ideas of the way the Gorge should be used were formed. A memo on the Dawley Development Corporation Draft Policy Plan for the Severn Gorge stated that:

> the enjoyment and experience of participating in areas of natural beauty is becoming an essential part of leisure…the activities in the Gorge could include angling, rambling, nature study, camping, picnicking, and just the pleasure of watching and listening to running water (Memo dated 11.2.67, reproduced in Thomas, 1982, Appendix CB).

Practically, the need to clear the area for redevelopment meant that outside of the Gorge there was little scope for the preservation of industrial remains. It was decided that the best compromise was to create an Open Air Museum to provide a new home for buildings and machinery from the area. In 1965 a report entitled *A Case for an Open Air Museum* was commissioned by Development Corporation. This identified that Coalbrookdale and the Iron Bridge had the potential to "attract worldwide attention", linking the development of the Museum intrinsically not only with conservation but also with the purposeful development of a future tourist attraction (report reproduced in Thomas, 1982, Appendix A, n.p.). As the Development Corporation could not expend the time and effort in managing such an endeavour, the idea emerged of setting up an independent Museum Trust to do so. A 1967

working party report recommended that a Museum Trust be established with the stated intention being:

> to secure the preservation, restoration, improvement, enhancement and maintenance of features and objects of historical, domestic and industrial interest in the area of Dawley New Town and the surrounding districts of East Shropshire, including the provision of museums and the organisations of meetings, exhibitions, lectures, publications and other forms of instruction relevant to the historical, domestic and industrial development of East Shropshire (Dawley Development Corporation Working Party, 1967, p13).


IRONBRIDGE GORGE MUSEUM

OPEN DAY

Sunday, May 7th, 1972 2 - 6-30 p.m.

Coach Tours of the Historic Monuments of the Severn Gorge

An opportunity to see . . .

* The blast furnace where iron ore was first smelted with coke.
* The first iron bridge in the world on which restoration has now started.
* Hand thrown studio pottery being made.
* Natural bitumen oozing from the walls of the Tar Tunnel.
* The restored slope of the inclined plane which lifted canal boats 207 ft. up the side of the Severn Gorge.
* A working plateway.
* "David" and "Sampson" the giant Lilleshall Co. beam engines — built by Murdoch Aitkin 1851—now re-erected.

REFRESHMENTS ★ SILVER PRIZE BAND
FREE CAR PARKING ★ PUBLICATIONS AND SOUVENIRS
WATCH THE GROWTH OF BRITAIN'S MOST AMBITIOUS OPEN AIR MUSEUM

Admission by Ticket only.

For tickets, fill in this form, cut it out and send to:
IRONBRIDGE GORGE MUSEUM TRUST,
SOUTHSIDE, CHURCH HILL, IRONBRIDGE, TELFORD, SHROPSHIRE, TF8 7RE

Please send me ..... Adult Tickets @ 40p. each.
Please send me ..... Tickets for children (under 12) @ 15p. each.
I enclose cheque/postal order value £ ...../..... p.
(Please make cheques, etc. payable to Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Ltd.)
Name .....
Address .....
Full details of arrangements will be sent with each order for tickets.

Figure 3.2: 1972 Open Day Flyer (IGMT, 1972, courtesy of Ironbridge Archives, 2007.235)

Between 1967 and 1968 the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (IGMT) was established (Thomas, 1982). Despite the area being relatively empty the public were invited to view the developing site at Blists Hill through Open Days, the first of which was in 1969 (Smith, 1989a). The itinerary for the Open Days included being able to visit the Old Furnace at Coalbrookdale, the Iron Bridge and the Tar Tunnel as well as the developing exhibits at Blists Hill (IGMT, 1972, Figure 3.2).

The Museum's first Director, Neil Cossons, had clear and strong aspirations for the site and is quoted in a statement made at the time of his appointment as saying that:

> in three to four years' time the Ironbridge Gorge Museum will be on a level with major continental museums… we are making the museum a national one and a major project in Europe. It will be of interest to people all over the country (Shropshire Journal, 1971a).

In order to do this it was evident that paying visitors would be vital, with Cossons telling a local paper that there was a need for at least 100,000 visitors a year (Shropshire Journal, 1971b). Thus, it was imperative that the visitor offer was developed rapidly, both in terms of the museum attractions and facilities and in marketing it. Blists Hill formally opened to paying visitors in 1973 and there were 78,000 visitors in that first year alone (Foster, 1993). Under the direction of Cossons the Museum grew not only as an attraction but as an idea. It was apparent from early in the decade that Cossons considered the site to have the potential to be of international renown, and not only was that the vision, it was backed up with concrete plans. He stated that:

> The industrial sites for which the Trust has responsibility are, far and away, the most significant in the world. It is essential therefore that the museum develops in such a way that the best possible treatment is given to those sites, that the best possible methods of interpretation are provided for the museum visitors, and that the best standards of research are carried out (Cossons, 1973, p13).

Throughout the 1970s the Museum grew physically and in terms of public profile. In 1975 a meeting was held to determine five projects which were designed to give the museum a national status (Thomas, 1985). These included the development of a new visitor reception centre in what is now the Museum of the Gorge, the opening of new museums at Coalport and Coalbrookdale, and the development of both new entrance facilities and an ironworks at Blists Hill (Thomas, 1985). The first three of these were achieved by the end of the decade and, with the opening of the Coalport China Museum, this vision began to come to fruition

as it won a number of national and European awards (Thomas, 1985). Throughout this decade work was taking place across the area to stabilise the land, repair buildings and improve the layout of the public spaces (Hayman and Horton, 1999). Figure 3.3 shows this work in progress. In 1979, the Iron Bridge had its bicentenary which was the focus for over a year of festivities. There was a large amount of press interest in Ironbridge Gorge with articles run in numerous European papers (e.g. Feitknecht, 1979; Journal FN, 1978; van Leeuwen, 1978) and publications from even further afield including the South China Morning Post (Blackwood, 1978), the Sydney Morning Herald (Barker, 1978) and the New York Times (Hershey, 1979).

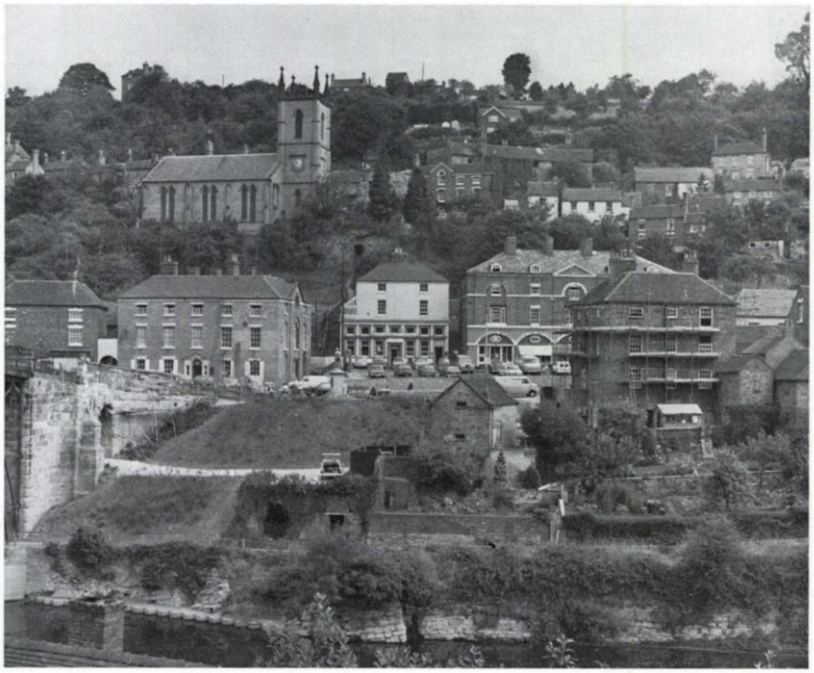

Figure 3.3: View of the area east of the Iron Bridge in 1976 showing work in progress to improve the area (Wright, 1976, p301)

The 1970s saw the Museum develop into a recognisable entity but its rapid growth had brought considerable financial strain on the organisation. The beginning of the 1980s saw a shift from visionary development, physical construction and conservation to much more

energy being funneled into consolidation, regulation and marketing (Smith, 1989a). This also let to a noticeable change in which activities were being promoted to tourists, with the museum sites, especially Blists Hill, in ascension compared to the Iron Bridge and the Old Furnace. The Bridge, after all, was free to visit and brought in no direct revenue to the Museum. Additionally there may have been a perceived need to broaden the appeal of the area as a destination in order to get people to visit in the first place. A quote from the Pittsburgh Press reflects this problem, saying that "well, nobody is going to travel to Shropshire just to see a bridge" (Heimbuecher, 1979, n.p.).

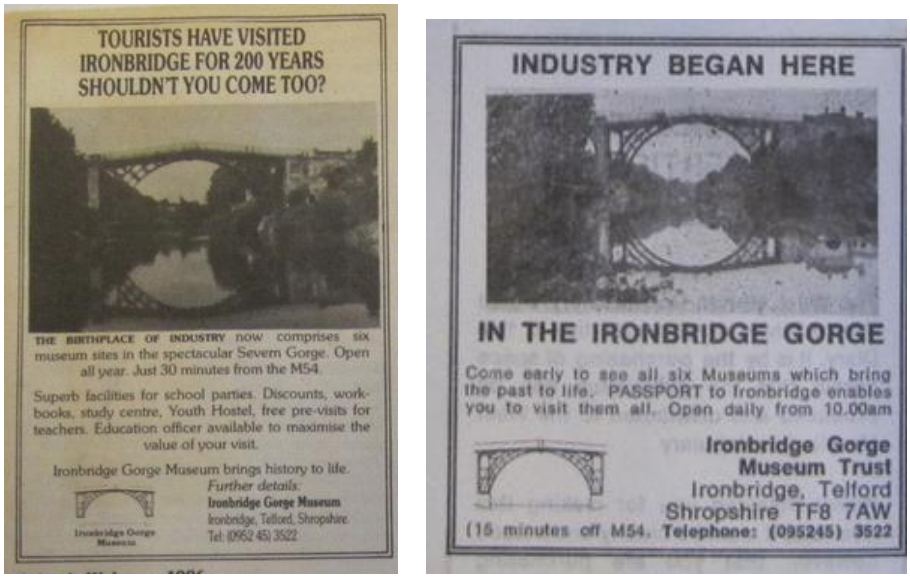

Figure 3.4: IGMT adverts from 1986 (courtesy of Ironbridge Archives)

At the same time the local council began to get involved with marketing tourism, seeing it as a potential solution to the extremely high unemployment in the region (Wrekin Council, 1985, de Soissons, 1991; Interview with Richard Bifield, former Tourism Manager, T&W Council). Figure 3.4 shows examples of IGMT advertisements from 1986, which emphasise the importance of the industrial history of the area, whilst also emphasising its infrastructure connections and numerous museums. Other developments in the 1980s, particularly the

opening of the M54 motorway as far as Telford, increased the accessibility of the museums, which when combined with the success of marketing meant that record visitor numbers and congestion in the Gorge began to become regular features the local press (de Soissons, 1991; Shropshire Star, 1984; Telford Journal, 1984). By the mid-1980s Ironbridge Gorge was arguably at its greatest height since the late eighteenth century. IGMT had won numerous awards, visitor levels were growing rapidly, new capital projects kept media attention focused on the museums and people were talking in terms of it being the "best museum in Britain" (In Britain, April 1984, n.p.).

3.2.3 Becoming World Heritage

The UK ratified the World Heritage Convention in 1984 and Parliament was keen to get sites inscribed onto the List (HC Deb 21 November 1985; UNESCO, no date-d). It was revealed late in 1985 that Ironbridge Gorge would be one of the first nominations to the List from the UK (HC Deb 21 November 1985). The site was inscribed in November 1986 but, unlike a nomination today, it was not a requirement to submit a Statement of Significance, Statement of Outstanding Universal Value or a Management Plan (T&W Council, 2017). As a result the best indication of how the site was perceived at its nomination comes from the documents recording its inscription and the Advisory Body evaluation. The report by ICOMOS, dated 23rd December 1985, recommended that Ironbridge Gorge be inscribed as a cultural property on the basis of criteria i, ii, iv and vi (Table 3.1).

The evaluation by ICOMOS, which has formed the core of the Statements of Significance and SOUV produced more recently, emphasised the primary significance of the Coalbrookdale Blast Furnace and the Iron Bridge as well as the collective importance of the landscape of industry spread across the area (ICOMOS, 1986, UNESCO, no date-c).

Particularly interesting is the use of the tourism to support the claim that Ironbridge Gorge is a "world renowned symbol of the eighteenth century Industrial Revolution" justifying the use of criterion vi (UNESCO, no date-c). Tourism to Ironbridge Gorge was not just seen as a consequence of its importance but was also part of the evidence used to prove its significance.

	Criterion	**ICOMOS Report**
i	"To represent a masterpiece of human creative genius"	"The Coalbrookdale blast furnace perpetuates in situ the creative effort of Abraham Darby I who discovered coke iron in 1709. It is a masterpiece of man's creative genius in the same way as Ironbridge [sic], which is the first known metal bridge. It was built in 1779 by Abraham Darby III from the drawings of the architect Thomas Farnolls Pritchard"
ii	"To exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design"	"The Coalbrookdale blast furnace and Ironrbdige [sic] exerted great influence on the development of techniques and architecture"
iv	"To be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history"	"Ironbridge Gorge provides a fascinating summary of the development of an industrial region in modern times. Mining centres, transformation industries, manufacturing plants, worker's quarters, and transport networks are sufficiently well preserved to make up a coherent ensemble whose educational potential is considerable"
vi	"To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance"	"Ironbridge Gorge, which opens its doors to 300,000 visitors yearly, is a world renowned symbol of the 18th-century Industrial Revolution"

Table 3.1: The identified elements of Ironbridge Gorge's OUV alongside the criteria descriptions (ICOMOS, 1986, p2-3, emphasis original; UNESCO WHC, 2017, pp25-26)

When the announcement was made that Ironbridge Gorge had been designated as a WHS the new status was instantly seized upon for its marketing potential, spearheaded by Head of Public Relations Katie Foster, who was attending a tourism trade fair when the news came through and reportedly spent the day faxing a press release to as many people as possible (Beale, 2014, p75). The press release stated that the "designation now places the Birthplace of the Industrial Revolution in common with the pyramids, the Grand Canyon, the Taj Mahal and the Statue of Liberty" (IGMT, 1986, n.p.). As will be seen in Chapter 5 this is still a part of how the World Heritage status of the site is communicated to tourists today (see section 5.2.1).

For many, World Heritage status was seen as merely another award accumulated by the successful Museum, albeit the "ultimate accolade" as Stewart Smith, the Director of IGMT at the time, referred to it (Shropshire Star, 1986, n.p.). *The Birmingham Post* (1986) wrote that Ironbridge Gorge had been "nominated as one of the 'Seven Wonders of Britain' on an international World Heritage List" and a Wolverhampton paper both referred to it as the "World Heritage Award" and confused it with the AA Museum of the Year awarded in 1987 (Wolverhampton Express and Star, 1987, n.p.). There is evidence that this attitude may even have prevailed within IGMT itself, perhaps not in the sense of misunderstanding the nature of World Heritage, but in terms of it being seen as yet another accolade for the museum to have acquired rather than a distinctly different status. A history of the Museum written as part of a corporate fund-raising effort stated that "the Ironbridge Gorge Museum has won all the major awards for which it is eligible, and in late 1986 UNESCO designated the Ironbridge Gorge *A World Heritage Site*" (IGMT, 1992, p17, italics original). Perhaps as a result of this the longevity of media interest in the status was short and the next time the World Heritage status of the site made a noticeable appearance in the press was in the context

of a planning dispute over a proposed new bridge over the Severn four years later (Schoon, 1990; The Times, 1990).

World Heritage status was still relatively new worldwide and was completely new to the UK. An IGMT marketing overview carried out in 1993 noted that it was primarily useful as a status that IGMT's competitors did not have (Foster, 1993, p8). Management of the WHS was the responsibility of the Local Authority which created a divide between the organisations directly involved in marketing the area and oversight of the WHS. Whilst incorporating the new status, the marketing being carried out by IGMT and by the council's Wrekin Tourism Association continued in much the same way as it had before. Newspaper coverage from the time indicates that there was an emerging conflation between the World Heritage status of the Gorge and the museums. At the time of the inscription *The Guardian* newspaper printed a sceptical article stating that "a printers shop in Shropshire…has been declared part of a World Heritage site by UNESCO" (The Guardian, 1986, n.p.). The printer's shop is an exhibit at Blists Hill making it irrelevant to the inscription. The use of it highlights the way that the museums had become largely synonymous with the heritage of the area as a whole, something exacerbated due to the unfamiliarity of World Heritage status to much of the media at the time.

This conflation, however, reveals a more problematic issue. The inscription of Ironbridge Gorge came at a time when the organisations involved in its management were evolving, creating a divide between World Heritage and those communicating the area to visitors. The WHS included areas outside of the control of IGMT and referred to the historical features of the Gorge rather than the museums themselves. In 1991, with the winding up of the Telford Development Corporation, this division was compounded with the areas of corporation land

within the site, but not occupied directly by IGMT put into the care of a new organisation, the Severn Gorge Countryside Trust (SGCT) (de Soissons, 1991). This was paralleled by a change in the way people were visiting the Gorge with the construction of a new bypass refocusing tourist attention away from the Iron Bridge and emphasising Coalbrookdale and Blists Hill instead (IGMT, 1988). All this was happening at a time when the high levels of tourism in the 1980s had seen a decline, responding to the wider difficulties of the early 1990s brought about by war in the Gulf and economic recession (IGMT, 1992, Foster, 1993).

While the initial management of the WHS was carried out by the Local Authority the management structure evolved through the mid-1990s and early 2000s. A WHS Strategy Group was formed to oversee the management of the site in 1995, the forerunner of the present-day Steering Group (see Table 3.2; T&W Council, 2017). In 2001 the first Ironbridge Gorge WHS Management Plan was produced. This document stated that the vision for the site was to be "one of the most complete and ambitious interpretations of early industrialisation in the world, within a vital living valley secure in its unique heritage" (T&W Council, 2001, 'Vision'). Tourism and the communication of the values of the site was foremost in the minds of the writers of the plan, which attributed it as both the justification for conservation and regeneration, as well as the way to finance such work (T&W Council, 2001, p25).

In the same year as the first WHS Management Plan was published the tourism industry entered a very difficult period. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 followed by a second war in the Gulf affected travelling patterns and were combined with an outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease which decimated travel within the United Kingdom in 2001 (Shropshire Star, 2002a). This was also a time, however, when Ironbridge Gorge and the wider area was being awarded

significant sums of money from a wide range of bodies, with grants from the European Regional Development Fund and the Regional Development Agency Advantage West Midlands among others (Shropshire Star 2002b; Shropshire Star, 2002c). This, alongside the new Management Plan, assisted the organisations involved in refocusing their work. The vision for a museum of industrial process which had first been proposed in 1988 (Uzzell *et al*, 1988) was finally realised with the opening of Enginuity in 2002, which had a significant effect on the way in which Ironbridge Gorge was perceived, effectively upscaling the 'brand' to a more energised and family friendly one (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2003). Evidence of this shift can be seen in advertisements from this decade (Figure 3.5), which particularly emphasise the family friendly nature of the museums. All of this was happening against a backdrop of significant change in tourist behaviour, affected for the first time by the internet and the instant availability of information. IGMT was quick to take on digital technology, investing in new ways to share its collections and thus attract potential visitors from as early as 1999 (Shropshire Star, 1999).

Figure 3.5: IGMT adverts from the 2000s (left: 2002; right: 2008) emphasising the family friendly appeal of the museums (courtesy of Ironbridge Archives)

From the late 1980's onwards there were regular visitor surveys carried out on behalf of both IGMT and T&W Council and the preceding Telford Development Corporation (Research Surveys, 1984, 1989a, 1989b, 1990a, 1990b, 1991; Martin Horne and Company, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1998; Heart of England Tourist Board, 1995, 2000). These predominantly focused on the demographics of the visitors and their motivation for choosing the Gorge. While there are individual fluctuations between the numbers of visitors staying overnight in comparison to those making day trips this remained relatively equally divided over the years. One trend that emerges from reviewing these reports is that people from lower socio-economic groups and/or younger people were more likely to visit Ironbridge Gorge without visiting any of the museums, indicating the broader appeal that the area has beyond the educational entertainment offered by IGMT. These visitors were often more interested in Ironbridge Gorge as a scenic place for a day out, while the museums themselves and the Iron Bridge were more likely to be the driving factor amongst visitors to the museums.

In 2008 the Steering Group commissioned the development of an Interpretation Strategy (PLB Consulting Ltd, 2008). This document reviewed the current visitor experience and audience profile of the WHS and made detailed and widespread recommendations for improvements to the way the site is communicated. Their research indicated that visitors to the site were primarily motivated by the opportunity to engage in leisure activities including walking, shopping and sightseeing, and by the environment in general which was perceived as scenic and family friendly (PLB Consulting Ltd, 2008). Central to their recommendations was that interpretation of the site needed to present the area as a single place, Ironbridge Gorge, with a central narrative of why this area became known as the 'birthplace of the Industrial Revolution' (PLB Consulting Ltd, 2008, p23). While this interpretation strategy

was never formally adopted it has had an impact on the interpretation of the WHS, with SGCT in particular using it as the impetus to develop a whole new suite of walking trails and interpretive panels (Interview with Russell Rowley, SGCT). This, when combined with a new World Heritage orientation centre which was opened at Blists Hill and the inauguration of an annual World Heritage Festival, both in the late 2000s, significantly added to the way in which the WHS and its values were communicated to visitors (Beale, 2014, p104; Shropshire Star, 2005).

The end of the decade saw an upturn in tourism to the region. A 2011 report on the value of tourism to Shropshire as a whole estimated that there were 11.6 million visits to the county in the previous year, comprising 11.5 million day trips and approximately 1.2 million overnight visits (The Research Solution, 2013, p13). The direct tourism income was approximately £501 million, with indirect economic benefits deriving from the 14,767 jobs that tourism creates and sustains (The Research Solution, 2013, p28). Shropshire Tourism, a private membership organisation focused on marketing Shropshire and its visitor economy, regularly commissions research on the motivations of visitors to the region. These reports have indicated that Ironbridge Gorge, alongside Ludlow and Shrewsbury, are 'key pulls' driving the visitor economy, with a smaller but significant additional factor being walking opportunities (TEAM, 2005). An issue identified in this research, in terms of the overall marketing of Ironbridge Gorge within Shropshire, was that people generally considered Shropshire to be rural and Ironbridge Gorge to be industrial and as a result not associated with the rest of the area (TEAM, 2005). More recent research, published in 2012, continued to see a division between Ironbridge Gorge and Shropshire, with the Gorge seen as family friendly while Shropshire as a whole was more likely to be perceived as a destination for adults (Arkenford, 2012).

One aspect identified through this commissioned research is that people were unlikely to respond positively to the idea of industrial heritage, although further questions indicated that Ironbridge Gorge was seen as the sort of heritage that they enjoyed (Arkenford, 2012). This is intriguing as it indicates that people had enjoyed Ironbridge Gorge as a heritage attraction yet did not think they were interested in industrial heritage, suggesting that Ironbridge Gorge may not be perceived as industrial. WHS status also did not compare favourably with other designations, such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, in the views of potential visitors on where they might wish to visit, although a considerable percentage were neutral indicating that the status may not be well understood (Arkenford, 2012). The significance of these research results is not just about what they may indicate about actual visitor perceptions but in the way they have subsequently affected the development of tourism strategy in the county, which is discussed below.

3.3 Ironbridge Gorge WHS 2016-2018

3.3.1 Managing Ironbridge Gorge

Managing WHSs involves interweaving strategies and structures ranging from the local to the international. At the highest level UNESCO and its Advisory Bodies produce Operational Guidelines (UNESCO WHC, 2017) and strategies such as the Sustainable Tourism Initiative (UNESCO, 2013) but implementation is left to the States Parties to the Convention. In the UK this results in further multi-level division of responsibility. The UK Government Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) acts as the 'State Party to the Convention' and are advised by Historic England, with additional work done by organisations in support of the devolved governments in Wales and Scotland (UKNatComm,

no date). Further responsibility for protecting and managing WHSs falls to the local authorities within whose administrative boundaries individual WHSs are situated.

Practical regulation of the management of WHSs in England and Wales comes through the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2018). This document states that any substantial harm or loss to a WHS should only be allowed in "wholly exceptional" circumstances (MHCLG, 2018, para 194b). It further asserts that local planning authorities should "look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites… to enhance or better reveal their significance" (MHCLG, 2018, para 200). In more general terms there are national bodies, including the UK Government, which commission and publish research into the impacts and value of World Heritage, which is used at a regional and local level to inform the direct management of sites and the visitor economy (Interview with Tim Jenkins, Shropshire Council).

Culture and heritage are major components of the UK's 'Nation Brand'. The country is seen as having a rich history and culture according to the GfK Anholt Nation Brands Index survey (VisitBritain, 2017). Research carried out by DCMS (2017) shows that heritage tourism is a significant motivation for domestic travel, with just under three-quarters of the population estimated as having visited a heritage site between October 2015-September 2016. The UK National Commission for UNESCO's most recent research on the *Wider Value of UNESCO* estimated that World Heritage status brings in around £61.1 million to the UK economy (UKNatComm, 2016). In national level discussions, World Heritage is generally considered as having a role to play in creating economic value and also in supporting the international reputation of the UK and underpinning its soft power (DCMS, 2016). Despite this Ironbridge Gorge itself does not feature heavily in the promotion of UK destinations to inbound tourists

by the national Tourist Board, VisitBritain. Ironbridge Gorge is mentioned in a list of WHSs but Shropshire is not one of the destinations included in the 'Central England' grouping they are actively promoting to international visitors (VisitBritain, no date).

The regional context of Ironbridge Gorge is that it is located within the boundaries of two local authorities, Shropshire Council (formerly Shropshire County Council) and Telford & Wrekin (T&W) Council, although the majority of the site is within the latter (T&W Council, 2017). The whole area is part of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership that groups together the two councils alongside Herefordshire to work with local businesses to drive forward development in the region, including tourism (Marches LEP, no date-a). As discussed above there were formerly a number of official bodies involved with tourism in the wider region including the Regional Development Agency Advantage West Midlands and the Heart of England Tourist Board. At the current time, however, there is little between the National Tourism Boards, VisitBritain and VisitEngland, and organisations operating at the county level. IGMT is one of 14 visitor attractions which are part of Heart of England attractions, which works in a partnership to promote tourism in the region (Heart of England Attractions, no date) and it is also part of a group called 'Shropshire's Star Attractions' (Visit Ironbridge, no date). However, these memberships represent the Museum rather than the WHS as a whole.

Both Shropshire and T&W Councils have an interest in promoting and developing the visitor economy in the area and Ironbridge Gorge plays a role for both organisations. For Shropshire Council, the Gorge is one of the biggest tourist attractions in the county and is seen as a 'hub' from which to encourage visitors to move out into the wider area (Interview with Tim Jenkins, Shropshire Council). In addition to Shropshire Council, Shropshire Tourism is also

a major force for marketing the region to tourists and in researching and developing the best strategies to do so (Shropshire Tourism, no date-a). Members are from both the public and private sector and include a large number of accommodation-providers as well as visitor attractions. Shropshire Tourism has a five-year Marketing Strategy (Shropshire Tourism, 2015) and an annual Marketing Proposals document (Shropshire Tourism, 2016). These documents identify that the key brand values for Shropshire are about qualities relating to ruralness; an 'undiscovered', 'old world', 'quaint' destination (Shropshire Tourism, 2015). Despite this, Ironbridge Gorge is still recognised as a key tourism driver and its World Heritage status is part of the brand identity developed for Shropshire (Shropshire Tourism, 2015). This is an interesting dichotomy, where the attractiveness of Ironbridge Gorge as a well-known and popular tourist attraction comes into conflict with the desire to promote Shropshire as a rural, and non-industrial, region. Thus, there is a deliberate effort to downplay the industrial history of the Gorge, implying that it is in the distant past, and that nature has reclaimed the Gorge (Interview with Simon McCloy, Shropshire Tourism).

Within the administrative boundaries of T&W there is only one Destination Management Organisation (DMO) and it is operated by the Council. While this organisation has had many previous names and configurations it currently takes the form of the 'Discover Telford' brand and a Visitor Economy Forum (VEF). While Ironbridge Gorge clearly forms a central part of the destination image they wish to promote it is a central priority of the DMO to broaden the market appeal of Telford from a singular focus on the Gorge. They are keen to highlight the Southwater development in the center of the town, as well as renewing efforts to promote the market towns within Telford and generally promote the area as a good destination for a longer stay (Interview with Discover Telford team). Through the VEF collaborative work is encouraged and developed between organisations and businesses

involved in tourism and this goes beyond the political boundaries of the council, recognising that tourists may be interested in the wider area. IGMT is heavily involved with the VEF with Anna Brennand, the CEO of IGMT, acting as Chair of the Forum (Discover Telford, no date-a). Thanks to the collaborative nature of the organisation it is possible for Discover Telford to go to trade fairs, which might be overly expensive for individual organisations, something which IGMT is involved in. The Destination Management Plan, written by the predecessors to Discover Telford, Telford Tourism Partnership, was under review at the time of writing (TTP, 2014).

At present Ironbridge Gorge WHS is under the overall management of IGMT who have taken on the role as a whole as part of a ten-year Service Level Agreement begun in 2012 with T&W Council, who have overall responsibility for the site's management (T&W Council, 2017). IGMT has long had a significant role in the management of the Gorge, as has been seen above, and at present they operate nine museum sites within the WHS, in addition to the Broseley Pipeworks which is beyond the boundary. The SGCT manages the countryside of the Gorge and there are also numerous privately-owned properties, of both residential and commercial nature, within the site (T&W Council, 2017). While the Iron Bridge is the property of T&W Council it is under the guardianship of the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and is looked after by the English Heritage Trust on their behalf (T&W Council, 2017). Operating above all of the individual organisations the WHS Steering Group oversees the overarching governance of the site. The Steering Group is made up of those considered to be the principal stakeholders in the management of the Gorge. There has been some form of Steering Group for the WHS since 1995 but the current form is the result of a relaunch in 2011 (T&W Council, 2017). The role of the Steering Group is to facilitate collaboration between local, regional and national organisations involved with

Ironbridge Gorge and to determine and champion a vision for the WHS both in terms of its practical outworking and direction (T&W Council, no date). The members of the Steering Group are shown in Table 3.2, which also notes their connection to the WHS.

English Heritage Trust	Responsibility for the Iron Bridge on behalf of the Secretary of State
Historic England	Advisors to DCMS (the State Party to the Convention (UKNatComm, no date)
The Environment Agency	Agency of the UK Government department DEFRA, with responsibility for the water environment.
IGMT	Operates 10 museums and manages 36 Scheduled Monuments and listed buildings. Additionally they are currently responsible for the overall management of the WHS under a Service Level Agreement from T&W Council.
Marches Local Enterprise Partnership	Organisation of businesses and local authorities across the region with responsibility for driving economic development. They identify Ironbridge Gorge as one of five major tourism hotspots in the area under their remit (Marches LEP, no date-b)
Natural England	The Government's advisor regarding the natural environment
Broseley Town Council, Madeley Town Council and Gorge Parish Council	Parish and Town Councils within the WHS
SGCT	Organisation who manage 260ha of woodland and meadows, ponds and open space within the WHS.
T&W Council	Local authority and owner of the Iron Bridge which is under the guardianship of the secretary of State and managed by English Heritage Trust
Shropshire Council	Local authority

Table 3.2: Members of the Ironbridge Gorge WHS Steering Group (T&W Council, 2017 unless otherwise stated)

The Steering Group have overseen the production of the current World Heritage Management Plan, which is the core document describing the vision for the site and how it will be managed until 2024 (T&W Council, 2017). It is not a statutory document and relies on consensus (T&W Council, 2017). As a result, the involvement of the Steering Group, which is made up of many of the key stakeholders, is absolutely vital as without the support of stakeholders the plan would not move beyond an aspirational document. The Management Plan relates to all aspects of the WHS and tourism is only directly part of a relatively small amount of it. However, the World Heritage values of the site, those things which contribute to its OUV, are central to the Management Plan, which states that "the protection of the OUV of the WHS is of prime importance and its wider understanding by residents, visitors and businesses is a key objective" (T&W Council, 2017, p49). This research is concerned with the communication of World Heritage values to tourists, so the management of those values across the Management Plan is relevant. The plan describes four things which are important to the management of the WHS; these are the safeguarding of the site, the strengthening of the community, interpretation and the incorporation of holistic planning (T&W Council, 2017). While tourism can enter into all of these areas, being, for example, a driver for development which would require holistic planning, it is the interpretation of the WHS which has the most direct relevance to communication of values to tourists.

The Management Plan includes a section dedicated to 'Tourism and Visitor Management'. While some of this is specifically focused on the practical requirements of visitor management such as repair of eroding footpaths and provision of adequate refreshment and toilet facilities the plan also looks at both the development of sustainable tourism and communication of OUV to visitors (T&W Council, 2017). 'Sustainable Tourism' is a

UNESCO initiative intended to promote the development of tourism which benefits the local community and the environment, as well as the visitors themselves (UNESCO, no date-e). The plan identifies a number of objectives for the next five years intended to increase the sustainability of tourism to Ironbridge Gorge including addressing the issues of social equity between tourists and locals (T&W Council, 2017).

None of the objectives identified in the Management Plan contribute directly to the communication of OUV, although they do relate to overarching UNESCO values of equality and sustainability. The plan identifies that the primary way in which visitors will be informed about the OUV of the WHS is through the interpretation available across the site, provided by IGMT and SGCT through the museums and heritage trails respectively. The World Heritage Festival and the World Heritage exhibition at Blists Hill are identified as being of particular significance in interpreting the values of the WHS and the importance of WHS status (T&W Council, 2017). While not specifically addressed as being part of the communication of OUV, the plan also addresses the issues of how to get visitors to spread out into the less visited parts of the site (T&W Council, 2017). Criterion iv (see Table 3.1), makes it clear that Ironbridge Gorge is significant not only for the specific monuments of the Bridge and the Old Furnace but also as a representation of a landscape of industry (UNESCO, no date-c). By encouraging visitors into under-visited parts of the Gorge the fullness of the landscape has more potential to be interpreted and for tourists to engage with it.

3.3.2 Representing Ironbridge Gorge to visitors

Interpretation about Ironbridge Gorge is provided to visitors by a number of organisations, both through the internet and utilising a range of materials on site, including leaflets, signage

and museum displays. There is also an increasing overlap between information tourists are able to access on site and those they are able to see prior to their visit because of the widespread use of smartphones. The actual engagement between the messages contained in these materials and the visitors who consume them is something that will be considered in Chapters 5 and 6, but they are also a useful source of information about the different bodies involved in communicating value in Ironbridge Gorge. This section will identify the organisations currently involved in interpreting the WHS to tourists and the methods they use. Additionally, there is a reflection on the content of the interpretation in relation to the World Heritage values of Ironbridge Gorge and how this affects the expressions of these values across different areas of the site. Table 3.3 is a summary of a full audit of interpretative materials available about Ironbridge Gorge (full chart in Appendix A). It shows the major organisations involved in communicating information about Ironbridge Gorge and the methods they use. The websites included featured on the first page of a Google search for Ironbridge Gorge at the time of writing and the signage and leaflets are easily available within the WHS. The table also notes the aspects of the site's OUV included in the material and the physical areas of the WHS where this material is located/available. The methodology used for collecting these materials is detailed in Chapter 4 (section 4.6 and 4.9).

Organisation	Methods of interpretation	World Heritage values included in interpretation	Where interpretation is available
IGMT	Museums	Most of the museums include interpretation covering all aspects of the OUV. The exceptions to this are the Tar Tunnel, Coalport China and Jackfield Tile Museums which focus on their specific themes.	Within the museums
	Signage	These include aspects of the industrial landscape and the significance of the area as a symbol of the Industrial Revolution. The Iron Bridge is included on a map and in the text of some of the signs. The Old Furnace is not included.	Outside the museums
	Ironbridge App (IGMT, 2015)	The app has interpretation about the Old Furnace and the Iron Bridge, as well as many features of the industrial landscape. The innovations that took place in Ironbridge Gorge are mentioned but the symbolic significance of the area is not.	Online
	Website (IGMT, 2018)	All aspects of the OUV are included.	Online
	Promotional leaflet (IGMT, 2017a)	The leaflet includes elements of the Gorge's industrial landscape and the Iron Bridge as well as the significance of the area as a symbol of the Industrial Revolution. The importance of Darby's iron-making innovation is included but not the Old Furnace itself.	Across Ironbridge Gorge as well as at interception points across the region
	Guidebooks (IGMT, 2010a; 2010b; 2017b; no date)	There are a number of guidebooks produced by IGMT. Between them they include all aspects of the OUV.	IGMT shops
SGCT	Walking Trail leaflets (SGCT, no date-a - no date-f)	All aspects of the OUV are included.	Station Yard car park (next to the Iron Bridge) and the VIC
	Signage	The majority of the signs are very specific, interpreting a particular feature of the natural area or part of the industrial heritage. However, several of the signs include information about the Iron Bridge and the symbolic significance of the area in the Industrial Revolution.	Throughout the woodland areas next to paths and one in Dale End car park
T&W Council	Maps (Visit Ironbridge & Telford, no date)	The orientation map leaflet created by T&W shows the WHS and emphasises the museum sites and the Iron Bridge alongside businesses in the area. This indicates the presence of features of	Available in the VIC

Organisation	Methods of interpretation	World Heritage values included in interpretation	Where interpretation is available
		the industrial landscape and the Iron Bridge but not the reasons for their significance and the Old Furnace is not shown.	
	Website (Discover Telford, no date-b, no date-c)	The website includes information about the Iron Bridge and highlights the symbolic importance of the area in relation to the Industrial Revolution. Some features of the industrial landscape are included, such as the Coalport China Works.	Online
	Signage	Group of signs leading an interpreted walk along the Coalbrookdale watercourses. Signs predominant identify features of the industrial landscape but include the significance of the Old Furnace and Abraham Darby's innovations with coke.	Along the Coalbrookdale valley
Shropshire Tourism	Website (Shropshire Tourism, no date-b)	All aspects of the OUV are included.	Online
English Heritage	Website (English Heritage, no date-a)	With the exception of the Old Furnace all aspects of the OUV are included.	Online
	Signage	The significance of the Iron Bridge and the importance of it as an innovation are included on this sign.	Fixed to the railings on north side of the Iron Bridge
Multiple – Jackfield Stabilisation Area	Signage	The signs give details of the stabilisation works and the reasons they were required, including information about the historic industries of the area.	Throughout the area of the Stabilisation Works
Multiple – World Heritage signs	Signage	These signs give information about the specific area they are located within (eg the Ironbridge Market Square) but include information about the area's importance as a symbol of the Industrial Revolution and the innovations that took place here, as well as highlighting the Iron Bridge.	Scattered across the WHS, including at museum sites, in Ironbridge and on the Severn Valley Way

Table 3.3: Organisations involved in communicating aspects of Ironbridge Gorge's World Heritage values to tourists and details of that information

The amount of information visitors to Ironbridge Gorge could potentially access is far in excess of the amount any one person is likely to encounter on a single visit, never mind be able to process. In terms of signage alone there are over 100 signs and plaques. Of these 46% were erected by IGMT, 15% by SGCT and 27% by T&W Council, often in collaboration with other organisations (Appendix A). The remainder were put up either individually or in small numbers by a range of other groups, including English Heritage, the Small Woods Association, the Aga factory and the Tontine Hotel.

Other information widely available to tourists includes leaflets and guidebooks as well as online information often specifically targeted at potential visitors browsing the internet for ideas about where to visit. The primary organisation involved in communicating the history and heritage of Ironbridge Gorge is IGMT, who not only operate the museums but also create leaflets which are widely available across the region, publish guidebooks and erect signage. There is an important spatial element, however. For every person who visits the museum sites there is another who only visits the Gorge (T&W Council, 2017, p54). For those who go walking along the numerous woodland trails the significance of the SGCT signage and walking trail leaflets may be much greater. Further information is also communicated informally by people working in tourist-facing roles across the area, something which is very difficult to quantify. Many of the buildings used today for tourist accommodation are historic and it is reasonable to assume that at least some of the visitors who stay in these places will learn about them from the staff. Particular examples of this are the Coalport Youth Hostel, which is housed in one of the former factory buildings of the Coalport China Works, and the Valley Hotel, which is the former home of George Maw, one of the prominent industrialists in the Gorge (YHA, no date; Interview with Valley Hotel manager).

In Table 3.1 the OUVs ascribed to Ironbridge Gorge are shown. These are at the core of what can be described as the 'World Heritage values' of the site. The elements featured in the OUV can be divided between those directly related to physical structures within the WHS and more intangible aspects. The physical structures specifically identified are the Coalbrookdale Old Furnace and the Iron Bridge as well as numerous elements which make up the evidence of it as an industrial landscape. The significance of the innovations made here and the importance of Ironbridge Gorge as a symbol of the Industrial Revolution are the intangible features. Table 3.3 shows that each of the major organisations involved in communicating aspects of Ironbridge Gorge's values cover most of these elements of the OUV across the interpretation they provide. However, while present in some materials, one of the most consistently absent features is the Coalbrookdale Old Furnace, which is often not shown on maps of the area. This is something which will be examined further in Chapters 5 and 6. It is worth highlighting, however, that the symbolic significance of Ironbridge Gorge, frequently summarised by the phrase 'birthplace of the Industrial Revolution' is specifically related to the innovations in coke smelting which occurred at the Old Furnace and this feature of the OUV is commonly included indicating some separation between the physical structure and the interpretation of the area. Spatially, it is also noticeable that interpretation of the features of the wider industrial landscape of Ironbridge Gorge are very common in the physical on-site interpretation. This is the result of individual signs and plaques interpreting specific structures. Depending on the locations which tourists visit or pass through very different arrangements of interpretation are available.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the evolution of Ironbridge Gorge as a destination for tourists since its earliest iterations as an icon for the development of new industrial technologies and the resultant fascination that the landscape of smoke and fire evoked. Since the eighteenth century visitors have been confronted by a place where both natural scenery and industry have woven together, creating a dichotomy between the aesthetic pleasure to be found in the countryside and technological or historical interest. Industry formed the primary reason for the development of Ironbridge Gorge as a place and also for the establishment of it as an attraction over the centuries, but the ways the area has been marketed to visitors and their reasons for wanting to visit has often focused instead on its scenic qualities. In this Ironbridge Gorge both reflects the larger travelling patterns of the eras and resists them. Even in the age where wealthy travellers began to seek out the wildness of the British countryside, the context within which the aesthetics of the industrial sublime began to emerge, the Lake District was a much more popular destination (Klingender, 1968; Towner, 1996).

In the early twentieth century visitors still came to see the area, drawn by the residual fame of the Iron Bridge and following the promises of a place where the countryside pursuits of angling, walking and golf could be engaged in. With the development of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust and subsequent inscription on the List the area has become a popular attraction for a wide range of visitors. Today the WHS is managed and interpreted by a number of organisations and businesses, none of whom are specifically focused on the communication of World Heritage values. In concluding this chapter, I would like to reflect

on how Ironbridge Gorge has come to be communicated in the ways it is and explore how these themes will be developed further in this thesis.

From industrial spies to industrial archaeologists, there have been a small number of people who have found Ironbridge Gorge fascinating for centuries. At the heart of their interest has been the things that have become the core of Ironbridge Gorge's ascribed OUV. From the innovations in coke smelting and advances in cast iron engineering, to the symbolism of the Iron Bridge and the Gorge itself as the 'birthplace of the Industrial Revolution' the appeal for visitors with an existing interest in industry is clear. What is intriguing is the way in which Ironbridge Gorge has been presented to potential visitors through the years in ways which only reference industry on the periphery. This can be seen from the eighteenth century when William Williams painted *An Afternoon View of Coalbrookdale* as a rural scene with the coke hearths and blast furnace featuring in almost a homely manner (Williams, 1777; Figure 3.1) to Discover Telford's (no date-b, n.p.) assertion that "the ironworks, foundry and mines… are now silent, their place taken by quirky boutiques".

For a period in the 1970s Ironbridge Gorge was a novelty; there was nothing like it elsewhere. The narrative that Ironbridge Gorge was the 'birthplace of industry' was portrayed in counterpoint to the death of the industries taking place at the time allowing the work of IGMT to be presented as a heroic effort to save the evidence of a past being lost. Today both the heritage and leisure markets in the UK are much more saturated and there is substantial competition to attract visitors. Ironbridge Gorge's inscription on the List came at a turning point for the area, pivoting from a high water mark in international recognition and visitor numbers to a much more difficult period. It is not surprising that the World Heritage status of the site has not substantially altered the way in which the values of Ironbridge

Gorge are presented to visitors. The industrial story is still an important part of the message but it is necessarily balanced with emphasis on the wide range of attractions available in order to bring in as many visitors as possible. Ironbridge Gorge is a complex WHS, having a number of organisations involved in its management, each with their own priorities. Until recently the World Heritage side of Ironbridge Gorge was under the management of the local council, but their primary role is in environmental and planning control not communicating with visitors. This is something which is evolving under the current overall management of the site by IGMT but their focus is primarily on the museum sites and monuments under their protection.

This thesis examines how World Heritage values are communicated to tourists in Ironbridge Gorge. This chapter has established the historical context in which this happens today. As will be seen in Chapters 5 and 6 the complexity of the site both as a landscape and in terms of its management have significant effects on the way in which it is interpreted to visitors.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

At the outset of this project one of my central concerns was to explore multivocality in tourism to Ironbridge Gorge. I wanted to include the many contrasting experiences and perspectives on what this place was; as an attraction, as a workplace, as a WHS and as a physical landscape. As such, I required a methodological framework that would allow me to examine multiple contesting narratives from as many perspectives as possible. It was important, therefore, to use an open-ended structure that would allow different avenues of enquiry. I chose to take a grounded theory approach, which has enabled me to develop an overarching analytical framework to use with a variety of sources, including interviews, participant observation and study of material and digital culture. This chapter will show how this methodological discourse informed the approach taken in this research. In the first section of this chapter the context of research into tourism and heritage is addressed, identifying the key problems that any methods used would need to overcome and how the different research questions were formulated to address the topic. This is followed by a discussion of why a qualitative approach was chosen before an account of the methods used to carry out the fieldwork and analysis. The final section of the chapter outlines the limitations and ethical considerations relating to the research.

4.2 Setting the research in context

Heritage and tourism are frequently linked together in both theoretical discussions of these fields and in the day-to-day reality of places around the world. Both are complex things to investigate individually and even more so in relationship to each other. Heritage, as discussed in Chapter 2, is created through powerful global discourses, but is often experienced through local encounters with place. While a place considered to possess heritage value is physically situated, people relate to them on the basis of their connection to the past, something which will be continually redefined in relation to its current socio-political context. Heritage, consequently, can mean different things to different people, who may engage with it in different ways. The study of tourism can be said to be, like heritage, the study of how people engage with particular places, but this is complicated by the inherent mobility of tourists. Whilst tourists may appear to be a constant, or at the very least seasonal, presence in a place, individual tourists are only present for a short span of hours or days. Thus, in order to explore the relationships formed between tourists and heritage it is necessary to incorporate both the multiplicity of heritage and the temporality of tourism.

The overarching objective of this project was to explore how World Heritage values are communicated to tourists in Ironbridge Gorge WHS. Whilst appearing relatively simple at first this question involves delving into how something intangible, value, is transferred in the context of a physical landscape. As identified above this must overcome the issues of studying both tourists and heritage. There are two key facets to this. First, there is no single tourist experience or tourist; thus methods are required which allow the voices of as many individuals as possible to be incorporated. Second, the experience of Ironbridge Gorge by tourists will be influenced by numerous agents and the role of the different organisations and

individuals involved in constructing the spaces within which the tourist experiences will occur must also be included. Recognising these two central aspects of complexity an overarching question was formed: what role do World Heritage values play in the construction of Ironbridge Gorge as a tourist destination?

This was then broken down into three research questions in order to address the different aspects of this problem in a logical fashion. The first question asked what the World Heritage values of Ironbridge Gorge WHS are and how are these formally communicated to tourists visiting the Gorge? This question explores the official narratives and bodies involved in managing tourism and interpreting the site to set the context for examining alternative narratives and creation of value in the Gorge. Essentially this question considers the communication of values to tourists from a top-down perspective, examining the transfer of value from those people and organisations involved in managing and serving tourism in the area. The second question is used to look at how tourists experience Ironbridge Gorge WHS and how much variation in tourist activity and location affects how they encounter the formal communications identified. This question was designed to open up more of the spatial and performance elements of tourism in the Gorge, assessing how variation in activity might interact with the communication of value. In contrast to the first question, this focused on the experiences of tourists as a lens through which individuals encounter the values of the site. The third question looked more specifically at the narratives created by tourists, asking how Ironbridge Gorge is represented in tourist narratives and how relevant World Heritage values are in this. This question allowed investigation of the constructive role of tourists themselves in contributing to the continuing recreation of the place they have visited.

4.3 Research Design

4.3.1 Qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods?

Research methodologies can be broadly divided into three approaches: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed, which encompasses elements of both. The distinction between quantitative and qualitative research reflects contrasting epistemologies, or ways of knowing. The former starts from a position where it is believed that reality is discoverable, existing outside of the researcher, whilst the latter sees the researcher as completely embedded in the construction of knowledge about reality, which itself is something continuously being created, although the idea that these approaches form incompatible paradigms should be avoided (Bryman, 2009). Methods derived from a quantitative approach are particularly suited for finding out about how things happen; they tend to focus on aspects that can be measured, producing data which can be incredibly useful for helping us to understand the world we live in (Bryman, 2012; Klein, 2007). If this research had focused on discovering the numbers of tourists to Ironbridge Gorge, their demographics or how long they planned on staying, this approach might have been appropriate. However, quantitative methodologies are often poorly suited for answering deeper questions, such as why people might act or think in certain ways and the dynamics of culture and society. For these things, qualitative research methods are ideal, as they allow for an in-depth exploration of complex socio-cultural processes (Dwyer and Limb, 2001).

Beyond these neat categorisations there are deeper divides in relation to how research is perceived. Qualitative methodologies implicitly acknowledge that the subject of research may be in a constant state of flux; not something which can be known absolutely (Dwyer and Limb, 2001). Law (2004, p2) refers to this as messiness; the things we research cannot

be described clearly if they are inherently unclear, leading Law to advocate for a more fluid approach to methodology which reflects the nature of the subject matter. In this study the subject has been the communication of value at a WHS, something fundamentally ephemeral in a context where ideas about identity, history, nostalgia, memory and aesthetics are significant factors. Tourism itself is also an inherently complex practice combining the activities of individuals, who have been defined by their behaviour to be 'tourists', with the global movement of people and associated infrastructure that we call 'tourism'. It is common to find discussions of tourists which assume that they will act *en masse*, which obscures the range of motivations, behaviour and experience that individual tourists will have.

It was clear that either a qualitative or mixed methods approach would be appropriate and, ultimately, a qualitative approach was chosen. Initially, I considered mixed methods as the ideal as it would allow me to combine gathering some statistical data about physical tourist movements within Ironbridge Gorge with the personal connection that individuals were able to make with it as a place. To this end, I piloted a time-space budget approach in an attempt to map routes of travel around the Gorge. It quickly became clear, however, that in the majority of cases tourists were only visiting one part of the WHS on any given day and that for those who were travelling to several places, there seemed to be little evidence of any particular patterns. In other words, the scale of effort required to gather good quality quantitative data about tourism in Ironbridge Gorge far outweighed its potential to open up new lines of enquiry or aid in understanding tourist encounters with value there. As a result, I decided to use a purely qualitative approach.

4.3.2 Temporality, individuality, intangibility and issues of space

There were a number of key issues that the methods chosen for this research needed to address. These were the intangibility of value as a subject matter, the temporality and temporariness of tourism, the individuality of tourists, and the spatial dynamics of Ironbridge Gorge as a destination. One of the most fundamental issues any methodological framework employed for this research needed to overcome is the problem of researching something which is, by nature, intangible, in this case, value. The nature of heritage, and World Heritage values have been discussed in Chapter 2 but this has only served to highlight the complexity of how value is created, maintained and, potentially, transferred. In order to investigate the communication of value it is not only important to understand how values are formally included in the ways that the site is presented to visitors but also to investigate the ways that tourists actually engage with them, if indeed they do at all. Many investigations of heritage and tourism have taken a survey-based approach (e.g. Crawford, 2015; Moscardo et al, 2001). However, these approaches, whilst capable of obtaining large sample sizes, can only adequately assess relatively simple questions and may have no facility to record the responses of people who say more than what they are directly asked (Brinkman, 2014, p286). In the context of how people engage with value it is the natural flow of thoughts which is precisely the most useful information to collect, reflecting how people instinctively perceive and describe their experience.

In this study, as will be outlined below, I have used a combination of interviews and observation to collect data on how tourists engage with the site following an ethnographic approach. Ethnography, which means 'writing culture', evolved from the discipline of anthropology and has come to refer to qualitative research immersively carried out in a

particular location over a long period of time which seeks to explore the meanings behind the way that a particular society or group does things (Mitchell, 2007). While ethnography is particularly useful for investigating intangible things such as the interaction between tourists and the values of a place, one of the most important aspects of a traditional ethnographic approach to fieldwork is time depth. Due to the short periods of time that tourists are present within a site, an ethnographic approach combining research methods including interviews and participant observation but carried out over a shorter timeframe is often employed in the context of researching tourism and is sometimes referred to as 'microethnography' (e.g. Konijn et al, 2016, p528). In order to attempt to get beyond the very narrow window of time within which I was able to interview and/or observe individual tourists I also interviewed people who work within tourism in Ironbridge Gorge, drawing on their perceptions which have been gathered over a much longer period, as well as using tourist-produced narratives posted online as a way of obtaining a longer view. This also allowed me to examine the roles of these tourism industry stakeholders as co-constructors of Ironbridge Gorge as a destination.

In addition to the methods derived from ethnography I was also influenced by the spatial concerns of geography and theoretical perspectives drawn from the study of tourism (see Chapter 2). A particular issue with this case study is the spatial dynamics of Ironbridge Gorge as a landscape. Previous studies, as described in Chapter 2 (section 2.5), have frequently only looked at tourism at individual places within this landscape rather than attempting to understand how it is performed as a whole. The spatial approach developed here will be described in more detail in section 4.8.1 but, primarily, it has involved carrying out fieldwork in multiple areas, allowing for comparison between them and also as a whole.

4.3.3 Grounded Theory Methods

Tourism is mobile, ephemeral and yet deeply connected to places and specific material and digital cultures. As a result, the potential range of data which could be collected was wide ranging, including those created from ethnographic methods such as fieldnotes and interview transcripts, alongside large quantities of text and visual materials. It was clear from the outset that this study would need to use a theory-building method which allowed for this range of data and which was consistent with my desire to give weight to the voices of the people I was investigating. 'Grounded Theory Methods' are both flexible enough to incorporate the range of data which was to be produced by this project and are also fundamentally rooted in the principle that theories must grow from the data themselves (Charmaz, 2006; Stern, 2007). This approach produces 'grounded theories' which have been formed through a systematic treatment of the data (Charmaz, 2006).

Grounded Theory Methods were originally proposed by Glaser and Strauss in a series of publications in the 1960s (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007; Glaser and Strauss, 1965; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser and Strauss, 1968) but approaches have since evolved in a number of different ways. Significantly, this has included a shift towards social constructionism, which has emphasised the role of the researcher in the construction of knowledge, as well as the potential for multiple perceptions of the reality of things (Andrews, 2012; Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). This acknowledgement corresponds with one of the central ideas about tourism as expressed above: that there is no single 'tourist experience' and that heritage values are perceived in multiple ways. As such, this research draws on the constructionist school of thought in grounded theory (see Charmaz, 2006).

In practical terms, applying Grounded Theory Methods to this project has had three particular areas of influence. The first is that the research questions focused on broad areas such as the experience of value in Ironbridge Gorge rather than following a hypothesis driven approach. The principle that the grounded theory must be built from the data forms the basis for this, which allows the research to remain open to new insight throughout (Charmaz, 2006; Matteucci and Gnoth, 2017). Secondly, following the principle that analysis must run through the entirety of the project, data was analysed throughout the fieldwork stages, allowing emerging ideas to be tested and developed (Charmaz, 2006). Finally, the analysis of the data took the form of several stages of qualitative coding which formed a continuous cycle of comparison throughout the project (Matteucci and Gnoth, 2017).

4.4 Geographical location and time period

This project has included archival, fieldwork and analysis stages, which while following on roughly from one another involved considerable overlap as detailed in Table 4.1. Details of the specific dates and subjects of interviews and observations can be found in Appendix B and C. Table 4.1 is colour coded to reflect the different stages of work discussed in the following sections. Green represents archival research (section 4.5), orange for the collection of material and digital culture (section 4.6), blue the research on the tourist industry of Ironbridge Gorge (section 4.7), purple for the work on tourists themselves (section 4.8) and pink for the analysis (section 4.9).

Activity	Date	5.16	6.16	7.16	8.16	9.16	10.2	11.2	12.2	1.17	2.17	3.17	4.17	5.17	6.17	7.17	8.17	9.17	10.2	11.2	12.2	1.18	2.18
Interviews with tourism stakeholders																							
IGMT Archive																							
Collection of material and digital culture																							
Observation: Iron Bridge																							
Observation: Events																							
Observation: Ironbridge town																							
Shropshire Tourism Archive																							
Pilot Study																							
Observation: Blists Hill																							
Observation: Old Furnace																							
Interviews with tourists in Benthall Edge																							
Interviews with tourists on the Iron Bridge																							
Interviews with tourists at the Old Furnace																							
Interviews with tourists at Blists Hill																							
Collection of online tourist-produced materials																							
Thomas Cook archive																							
Shropshire Archive																							
Analysis																							

Table 4.1: Stages of research

4.5 Archival research: the development of Ironbridge Gorge as a tourist attraction

Before the fieldwork stage began, it was important to understand the historical context of the development of tourism to Ironbridge Gorge. The Gorge has been a tourist attraction since the eighteenth century, although it largely fell out of fame between the late nineteenth century and mid-twentieth century making its re-emergence as a tourist attraction a separate phenomenon from its earlier manifestation (see section 3.2). There has been very little published relating to this part of the site's history; the majority of sources focus on the eighteenth and nineteenth century history of the area and those that do concentrate on the more recent history often have particular biases due to being commissioned works (e.g. Beale, 2014). Thus, developing an understanding of the evolution of the different stakeholders and the context of the creation and subsequent re-imaginings of Ironbridge Gorge as a destination was fundamental to build an analysis of the current situation.

The archival research was predominantly carried out within the IGMT's Research Library (hereafter, Ironbridge Archive) between June and July 2016. As well as extensive materials about the history of the area and its industries, the archive holds many more recent documents relating to the development of IGMT, including materials produced by the Telford Development Corporation. This meant that additional research at the Shropshire Archives was only required to access a small number of documents which were not replicated. Of particular interest were Ironbridge Archive's collection of newspaper clippings relating to Ironbridge Gorge from 1970 to the present day and their collection of market research reports from the 1980s onwards.

The archival research began with the systematic reading of documents relating to the development of the Museum. This included published books, internal reports and documents

produced by Telford Development Corporation. These were used to construct a historical account of Ironbridge Gorge as a tourist destination from the 1950s onwards, which can be found in Chapter 3 (see section 3.2). Secondly, Ironbridge Archive's collection of market research was explored and information collected for analysis. Finally, the newspaper clippings from 1970-2010 were sorted through, with record taken of any which related to key events, or were aimed at potential visitors. This was used both to complement the formal documents and histories of the Museum and Telford Development Corporation and to provide a dataset for comparison with the modern portrayal of the site. This collection of clippings is the source of a number of quotes included in Chapter 3. Due to the nature of the collection, which includes articles cut away from their original page, the majority of these references are cited as 'n.p.' (no page). A return visit was made in January 2018 to review selected sources, reflecting the directions that the research had followed through the previous year.

In January 2017, following the completion of the initial archival research stage at the Ironbridge Archive, Shropshire Tourism directed me to their online collection of market research, including destination and visitor profiling and strategy relating to the promotion of attractions within Shropshire. These materials provided interesting insights into the period from c.2008, when the quantity of materials in the Ironbridge Archive begins to decrease.

In the course of developing a historical perspective on the growth of tourism to Ironbridge Gorge I came across a reference in Trinder (1988) to a 1946 Thomas Cook brochure which had featured the area. After contacting the Thomas Cook Company Archive their archivist was able to provide me with scanned copies of this publication (Thomas Cook, 1946) alongside an additional source from the 1920's (Thomas Cook, 1928). In February 2018 a

visit was made to the Shropshire Archives in Shrewsbury to look at examples of mid-twentieth century guide books from their collection, in particular *A Shell Guide: Shropshire* (Piper and Betjeman, 1951).

4.6 Fieldwork – Stage 1: Material and digital culture

4.6.1 Material Culture

Tourists in Ironbridge Gorge have a wide range of material culture to engage with and consume. This could include everything from takeaway coffee cups and shopping bags emblazoned with an image of the Iron Bridge (Figure 4.1), a tile they decorated at the Tile Museum, to the wide range of guidebooks, leaflets and signage provided as interpretation. Over the period between October 2016 and August 2017 these materials were either photographed or collected for analysis and a combination of written and visual fieldnotes were produced.

Figure 4.1: Packaging featuring the Iron Bridge (photographs: Acheson, left: 10 April 2016; right: 24 November 2016)

4.6.2 Digital Culture

Websites which tourists could potentially use when planning a trip to Ironbridge Gorge were identified using the search engine Google. All websites listed on the first page of results for a range of search terms (including 'Ironbridge Gorge', 'days out in Shropshire', 'Ironbridge things to do' etc) were visited until no new websites were generated in the search. The text and images from these websites were copied into Microsoft Word for analysis (see section 4.9). Coach trip itineraries were also identified and collected through following this method. Following this, the individual websites of accommodation providers within Ironbridge Gorge and the Telford area were visited, as well as larger websites such as Booking.com. The 'about the area' information was collected for each website. Finally, the websites of every tourist-facing business and organisation in Ironbridge Gorge such as shops and cafes, were also located and the descriptive content collected in the same way.

Media coverage of Ironbridge Gorge from 2016-2017, including newspaper and television features, were collected by copying the text and images from the digital versions of the newspapers, or by transcription in the case of television programmes. Additionally, the interpretation of the site provided by IGMT in the Ironbridge App, as well as the crowd-produced interpretation on the Geocaching and Pokémon Go apps, was recorded by taking a screenshot of the content which was then transcribed. Table 4.2 summarises all the material and digital culture collected and the methods used for its collection.

Object	Method of collection	Quantity
Signage (including plaques)	Photographed	111
Guidebooks	Purchased from shops within the Gorge	13
Leaflets	Collected from around the Gorge	31
Websites (accommodation, tourist information etc)	Text and images copied into word processing document for analysis	107
Television programmes featuring Ironbridge Gorge	Programmes broadcast in 2016-2017 were transcribed	5
Newspaper coverage	National and local newspaper coverage from 2017-2017 text copied into word processing document for analysis	64
Coach trip itineraries	Text and images copied into word processing document for analysis	5
Apps	Screenshots of app content collected	3
Postcards	Collected from shops around the Gorge	92

Table 4.2: Material and digital culture collected

4.7 Fieldwork – Stage 2: the tourist industry

Tourist experience of place is mediated through many 'official' and 'unofficial' bodies. These range from those involved in attracting visitors and developing aspects of the site specifically for tourist consumption to those who work in providing services to visitors and potentially many others who encounter and influence the visitor before, during or after their visit. In order to develop an understanding of the ways in which tourism is managed in Ironbridge Gorge, and to capture some of the many voices that the tourist might themselves encounter, I carried out semi-structured interviews with tourism industry stakeholders. This included people who had historically been involved in tourism to Ironbridge Gorge, people currently involved in managing tourism to Ironbridge Gorge, and service providers with a

tourist-facing role in the Gorge (shops and hotel staff, tour guides and museum volunteers). A complete list of the interviews carried out is included in Appendix C.

4.7.1 Recruitment and information.

Tourism industry stakeholders were primarily recruited through emailed requests, or by visiting their business in person. Emailed requests were sent to organisations involved in tourism in the Gorge and to all tourist-facing businesses with a publicly available email addresses. Participant information about the project was included in the email. Those businesses which did not advertise an email address were visited and I spoke to the manager/owner if available, or left a flyer if they were not. In both cases a flyer containing participant information was provided, whether it was left partially for recruitment purposes or purely for information if they had expressed willingness to take part. Additional participants were recruited through an advert posted on the 'Telford Live' Facebook page, a popular community network. All participants were required to indicate their understanding and consent through the use of a consent form. Copies of both the consent forms and the text of the participant information, whether transmitted by email or in a printed flyer, are included in Appendix D.

4.7.2 Interviews

Thirty-five tourism industry stakeholder interviews were carried out between November 2016 and August 2017 (numbers 1-26, 20-33, 53-55, 204 and 241 in Appendix C). The majority (23) were carried out in person, but where this was not possible for the participant they were done by phone (5) or by email (7). Interviews were generally conducted at the participant's place of work, with occasional exceptions including meeting in a pub, coffee shop or the participant's home according to their preference. The location and length of the

interview is included in Appendix C. They were semi-structured in nature and took the form of discussing a number of themes relating to the conduct of tourists and tourism providers in the Gorge, the participant's perspectives on the role of World Heritage and historical perspectives. Semi-structured interviews are a widely adopted qualitative approach to interviewing and reflect that, due to the conversational nature of carrying out an interview, they can never be fully structured, or unstructured (Brinkman, 2014, p285). As such they were undertaken with a specific purpose in mind and covered similar themes with each participant but were open-ended in nature which allowed me to let the person I was interviewing talk freely with relatively few prompts. Often this involved simply asking the participant to tell me about their role and their perspectives on tourism in the Gorge, after which I used prompt questions to guide them into telling me more about particular things. The interviews ranged in length between around 10 minutes, in the case of some of the busier businesses, to 45 minutes to an hour in the case of those involved in managing tourism in the area. The emailed interviews were more structured, by their nature, but still used open questions with follow up questions were exchanged through additional emails. Interview schedules are included in Appendix E.

Interviews were recorded by hand using jottings: a form of abbreviated notes collecting key phrases used, words and half-sentences (Emerson et al, 1995). Immediately after the interview these were written up in full, using the jottings as prompts. After this they were word-processed prior to coding (see section 4.9). I chose not to take audio recordings as, following initial discussions with potential interview subjects, it was clear that many were uncomfortable with the idea of being recorded, something particularly understandable given the business context of the discussions. While others may have been happy to allow recording I wanted to use a consistent approach throughout.

Interviews with key informants, such as those involved at a high level in tourism provision both now and historically, were not kept anonymous. This was because their role and history of involvement with the case study site was the reason for their inclusion in the study which would make them identifiable through their contribution. However, concerns about anonymity were always discussed should they have any concerns and decide to provide some responses anonymously in order to deal with sensitive issues (see section 4.11). Those involved in running tourist-facing businesses in the area were assigned a confidential identifier for the purposes of analysis, although they were made aware that, given the small size of the area, it was possible that they might be identifiable. All participants were offered the option of fully anonymising their contribution, something which was only requested by two participants. These interviews were anonymised during the transcription process and great care was given to how their contributions have been used in the following chapters to ensure that there was nothing identifiable.

4.8 Fieldwork – Stage 3: tourist experience

Complementing the research into the material culture of tourism and the interviews into the people who work to manage the destination and look after the needs of tourists, were a series of approaches taken to capture the views and experiences of the tourists themselves. Ethnographic methods were used, combining participant observation, general observation and interviews. The short-term nature of tourism means that this cannot be considered a traditional ethnography but the methods are still an excellent way to approach researching the ways in which people interact with Ironbridge Gorge as a space. However, by incorporating digital materials produced by tourists, it is possible to expand on the on-site

ethnographic methods, which, as Larsen (2008, p155) points out, can lead to the researcher only glancing at "passing flows" during work on tourism.

4.8.1 Spaces

In order to make the best use of the tourist season this work was focused on four spaces within Ironbridge Gorge: the Iron Bridge, the Old Furnace, Benthall Edge and Blists Hill Victorian Town. These were chosen as places which were either significant places in respect to the World Heritage designation (see section 3.2.3), or because they are particular foci for tourists.

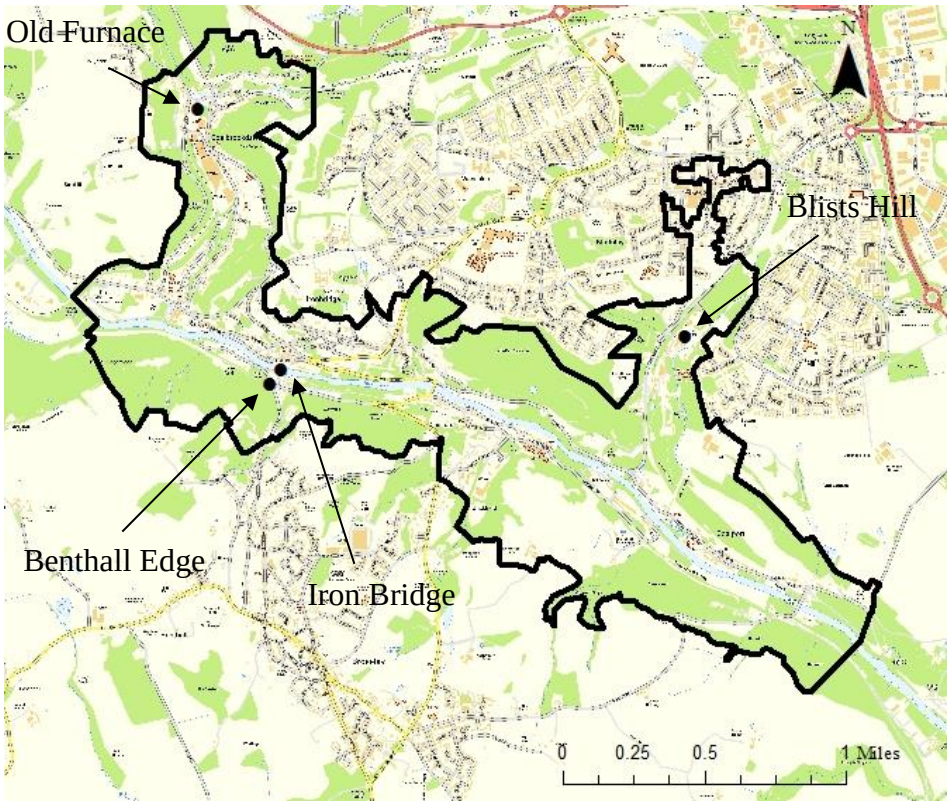

Figure 4.2: Map of Ironbridge Gorge showing the four spaces chosen for investigating tourists' experience

The Iron Bridge and the Old Furnace are the two central monuments of the WHS and the Bridge is indisputably the most iconic feature of the local area and a major tourist attraction in its own right. The Old Furnace experiences considerably less tourism, but is of at least equal if not greater significance historically, making it an interesting contrast to the Bridge. Benthall Edge is an area of woodland on the southern side of the River Severn. It includes numerous historical industrial features and is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It was chosen to represent the numerous historical woodland areas within the Gorge as it is centrally located, with paths leading into it directly from the Iron Bridge, and because it has a number of different styles of walks including easy flat routes used by cyclists and horse riders, as well as more challenging walking routes. Blists Hill Victorian Town is by far the largest of the IGMT sites. While the Museum itself does not relate closely to the WHS, focusing on Victorian life, it has a small exhibition about the WHS, intended to encourage visitors to explore the wider area. This exhibition space was used as a focus for interviewing and observing tourists but I also included general observation within the museum site as a whole and interviews with people at the exit. A final reason for choosing these specific spaces was that they represent spaces managed by the main stakeholders in the Gorge. IGMT manage both Blists Hill and the Old Furnace, while SGCT manage the Benthall Edge woodland. The Iron Bridge is a guardianship site and is operated by the English Heritage Trust, but it is the property of Telford and Wrekin Council who manage the public realm around it.

4.8.2 Participant observation

Participant observation formed a central part of the methods employed to research tourism in Ironbridge Gorge. Across the course of the year I visited the site on many occasions acting

as a visitor. I took part in a wide variety of events, went on guided tours and joined special interest group activities, as well as participating in general tourist behaviours such as walking, photography, souvenir shopping, geocaching, and youth hostelling (for particular events see Appendix B). In the case of organised events or tours I identified myself to the organisers in advance and ensured they had no issues with my joining them. During and afterwards I wrote detailed fieldnotes in a notebook, which I later transcribed for analysis. Only anonymous data on general tourist activity was collected during this, but I often answered questions about my research and provided information to anyone who was interested. One thing to note is that the Ironbridge Gorge WHS Festival, which is mentioned in Chapters 3 and 5, did not take place in 2017 which meant that is was not included in the research.

4.8.3 Observations

In addition to participant observation I also carried out more general observation at the four sites described above. This was carried out over a number of successive days where I recorded what I saw tourists doing within these spaces. Details are included in Appendix B. As above, notes were taken in a notebook and later transcribed for analysis.

4.8.4 Interviews

Across the summer season (from the Easter school holidays until the end of August 2017) I interviewed 204 visitors/groups of visitors to the site in the four areas described above (Appendix C). Interviews at the Iron Bridge and Benthall Edge were carried out throughout this period, initially during the Easter school holidays and at weekends throughout May-July and then on two weekdays a week during the summer school holidays. Interviews at the Old Furnace and Blists Hill were carried out more intensively for eight days respectively

during the School summer holidays (four days per week for four weeks over the two sites). As these two sites are IGMT property I needed to work around the Museum's own market research schedules, as well as reflect the fact that the sites are very quiet during school term weekdays (see Table 4.1).

Tourists were recruited on-site to participate in a short, informal interview. I told them that I was a PhD researcher looking at tourism in Ironbridge Gorge and asked if they would be willing to answer a few short questions in support of this. I openly took handwritten notes in a notebook and neither asked for or recorded any identifying information. Participation was completely voluntary and the majority of people I approached were happy to talk for a few minutes. On completion of the interview I thanked them and answered any questions they had about my research.

A semi-structured interview method was used, although in some cases, where participants had little time and gave yes or no answers, this effectively became a structured interview. However, in all cases, open-ended questions were used (see interview schedules in Appendix E) and, if the participant was responsive, I would draw them into greater discussion. As with the longer interviews carried out with the tourism industry stakeholders I used jottings to record the interview and then wrote them up in full immediately after the completion of the interview. At the end of the day all the interviews were word-processed for analysis.

4.8.5 Tourist-produced materials online

The final aspect of this part of the research was the collection and analysis of tourist-produced materials about Ironbridge Gorge found on the internet. This focused on reviews posted on the TripAdvisor website and Instagram posts tagged with the hashtag

#IronbridgeGorge. The purpose of this was to broaden the data I was able to collect about tourist narratives from on-site research. Interviewing people on-site was very important but this only represented their thoughts about the site during their visit and, as shown in Chapter 2 (see section 2.3.3) tourists continue to frame and reframe their experiences once they return home. Data from Twitter and personal blogs was collected but was discounted after initial analysis highlighted the difficulties of using it to address the research questions in any depth. Users of Twitter who posted tweets relating to Ironbridge Gorge were revealed to be predominantly local businesses rather than tourists. Searches only revealed a small number of blogs featuring Ironbridge Gorge and these, although frequently written by tourists, reflected only a narrow subset of visitors, particularly those travelling for a long duration, and thus they were also discounted. Instagram and Trip Advisor are both popular platforms for tourists to share pictures and reflections about their trips making them a particularly useful counterpart to the on-site methods employed.

Due to the large volume of potential material on Instagram and Trip Advisor I limited the sample to 12 months of posts. This 12-month period corresponds to the year over which the fieldwork was carried out: September 2016 to August 2017 (inclusive). Initial analysis revealed that the majority of reviews for places such as Blists Hill focused on the more mundane aspects of visitor experience such as toilets and cafes. As a result, I further narrowed the sample of reviews to those posted about the Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, which includes the Old Furnace and the Iron Bridge and Tollhouse (Trip Advisor, no date-a and no date-b). The text of the reviews was copied into a Microsoft Word document and qualitatively coded in the same ways that the interviews and other field notes were (see section 4.9). There were 321 reviews collected relating to the Iron Bridge and Tollhouse and 250 for the Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron.

Instagram users do not have to indicate the subject of their images and if they do so they can use a number of different methods, including 'tagging' a business or location, mentioning the subject in a comment or by including a location specific hashtag in a comment. Hashtags are short phrases denoted by the symbol '#' to allow them to be found and grouped online (Gannes 2010; OED, no date-b). More recently, however, their use has evolved beyond this to being metacommunicative. Daer et al (2014, p1) show this using the example of what they call a "semantic tag (e.g., #SuperBowl)" with a "metacommunicative tag (e.g., #PackersGottaWinThis)". This created a methodological challenge for the collection of a dataset of images posted featuring Ironbridge Gorge. I decided to use a hashtag as a way of identifying a sample of images. Hashtags are searchable and also indicate an implicit openness by the poster of the image for it to be seen publicly. While Instagram is one of the most public forms of social media (Miller et al, 2016) there are ethical issues inherent in the use of these forms of media in research and the use of hashtags as a way of identifying images allows a level of self-identification by the users.

Images posted on Instagram were identified by the use of the hashtag #IronbridgeGorge. An initial review of images posted under the hashtag #Ironbridge indicated that there was a wide variety of different geographically located subjects for which that hashtag is used, including many which I would not have been able to determine whether they came from Ironbridge Gorge or not. As a result, I chose to use the more specific hashtag. I created a database in Microsoft Excel and recorded information about all of the images within the sample using fields for the name/identifier of the Instagram user, the general subject of the image, specific details, whether or not people were included in the images, the month it was posted and any additional details. From this initial sample I then reviewed the names/identifiers of the users in order to manually narrow the focus of the sample to posts

made by visitors. Firstly, posts made by businesses and organisations were removed from the database. I then looked for any users who posted over more than a single month and checked their profiles and the comments on the images to discover if they lived locally. This follows the method used by Fischer (2010) in his work *The Geotaggers World Atlas,* who distinguished between local and tourist posts on Instagram through repeated posts over a period of time. The final sample in the Instagram dataset used for this research included 1008 images which were then subjected to qualitative analysis.

4.9 Analysis

As shown in Table 4.1, in line with taking a grounded theory approach, analysis began at the same time as the fieldwork. The stages of analysis followed the broad approach described by Charmaz (2006) with initial coding and memo writing followed by more data collection, focused coding and then drafting analysis text. As shown above, the data collected over the course of the fieldwork ranged from interview transcripts to the packaging used in gift shops. Those materials which could be transferred into a text format were gathered together in Microsoft Word (i.e. transcribed interviews, content from signage and fieldnotes). Image files were given a written description alongside identifying information using a Microsoft Excel database. Additionally, a Microsoft Excel database was created to compare all the interpretative and marketing materials collected and compare which elements of the site's OUV are included (Appendix A).

All data went through an initial qualitative coding stage where individual elements were broken up and described. An 'individual element' could be a sentence or part of a sentence from a transcript or section of fieldnotes, or a feature of a photograph. When the data was collected in a word-processed format this was done through using the comment function in

Microsoft Word. An example of this is shown in Appendix F. In the case of visual data, including the dataset I had gathered of Instagram images, this took the form of describing the contents of the image into a field of the Excel database rather than through comments in Word. Following this I wrote interpretative memos, where I started to contrast these blocks of data against each other and develop interpretations about what might be happening. These were not focused particularly on answering my research questions at this stage but on developing a wider sense of the nature of tourism in the Gorge. Appendix G, a set of early memos written on the theme of 'staying in the gorge' based on interviews with accommodation providers, is an example of this stage. Stern (2007, p119) describes memos as the "mortar" that sticks the data "building blocks" together, which felt very appropriate as I began to combine different types of data together to form descriptions of how I believed things were happening in the Gorge. This initial stage of qualitative coding was carried out alongside the fieldwork stages. Additionally, a Microsoft Excel database was created to compare the ways in which the World Heritage values of the site are communicated within the interpretative and promotional materials collected (see section 4.6 and Appendix A). Aspects of the site's OUV were identified and given a number (1-6) and were noted as present or absent within these materials. This comparative data was used to inform the wider analysis.

I began the focused coding stage in the last few months of the fieldwork with a more intensive period in September and October 2017 immediately following the completion of the fieldwork. Through this I began to filter out the codes and memos which did not help me answer my research questions. This meant that I developed codes which were much more specific, such as 'importance of the Iron Bridge', 'the village is quaint', or 'World Heritage as kudos'. I made a decision to code data by hand, moving onto printed out copies after the

initial coding stage, as I found it easier to think through what the links between the codes were when working in this way. I made large diagrams on A3 sheets of paper and wrote memos in notebooks, all of which have been retained. Following this I began to draft analysis text directly into a narrative form, which in turn forced me to return to my notes and data to look for evidence of trends that I saw emerging as I wrote.

Given the seasonality of tourism it was important to collect all the data I needed within a set period of time. This involved working intensively within the site through the summer months, especially on warm days as changes in weather meant that it was not always possible to follow a rigid plan for fieldwork. However, by mid-August I felt I had achieved saturation of the data and moved into the focused coding stage in order to ensure there were no gaps that were still outstanding. I took an intuitive approach to assessing data saturation. Stern (2007, p117) gives the example of knowing that saturation, the point at which nothing new is being added with the accumulation of additional data, has been reached by being bored in an interview. In many cases it was this sense of restlessness that indicated to me that there was no benefit in researching a particular area or activity further. Similarly, when comparing the data beyond the end of the fieldwork, I stopped analysing when I felt it finally made sense and no new insights were emerging through further coding.

4.10 Limitations

In carrying out this research I attempted to create and analyse data about the subject as comprehensively as possible but there were a number of key limitations to the methodology chosen. Some, such as the closure of parts of the site to tourists during the year I was carrying out fieldwork, were beyond my control and are very difficult to avoid when working with a historic landscape in need of considerable conservation. In September 2017 work belatedly

began to conserve the Iron Bridge, something which I had originally planned on using as a prompt to get visitors to discuss what they considered the values of the Bridge to be. However, the delayed start in the works meant that this was not possible.

The methods employed for this research have been entirely qualitative. As described in section 4.3 I initially planned to use a mixed methods approach incorporating quantitative analysis of tourist movements around the Gorge. A pilot study, carried out in February 2017, revealed that the widely spread nature of the museum sites made it difficult to collect high-quality data on the movements of individual visitors. As a single researcher it was not possible to develop a method which would allow this data to be captured without exhausting a considerable amount of time. As this information would not have substantially advanced understanding of the issues targeted by the research questions, the quantitative element of the research was dropped.

Interviewing tourists poses a number of problems. Generally, individuals were happy to answer a small number of questions but they often appeared to expect a questionnaire type of approach and many gave short answers. While I was able to speak at greater length to a smaller number of visitors this was relatively rare. Further, by focusing on interviewing visitors in particular places I was only able to touch on nuances relating to the specific performances that motivated them to come to the site, for example walking or shopping. An alternative way of conducting the interviews would have been to approach individuals on the basis of what they were doing rather than where they were, which might have revealed some new results.

It was also not possible to interview the full range of tourism industry stakeholders. I approached every business and organisation with a tourist-facing role within Ironbridge

Gorge or who work in direct relationship to it. I had a good level of response and was able to interview at least one representative of most of the relevant groups, such as shops and cafe owners, people working in tourist accommodation providers and representatives of the Destination Management Organisations. However, I was unable to get a response from anyone working for the various coach tour operators who visit the area which meant that this perspective could not be included.

Finally, this research has focused on Ironbridge Gorge, a single case study site. This has allowed a multi-layered investigation of how tourists engage with the various aspects of a single place but is limited without comparison to other sites. I attempted to mitigate this by visiting every WHS in the UK during the course of this research, with the exceptions of St Kilda and the sites in the Overseas Territories. I also discussed the project informally with World Heritage practitioners from across the UK while volunteering with World Heritage UK.

4.11 Ethical Issues

As the nature of this research involves human participants careful review of the ethical considerations was required. The research methods were approved by the University of Birmingham's Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee. Where work was carried out within the property of IGMT permission was sought prior to research being carried out. There were a number of ethical considerations, including the anonymity of participants and ensuring informed consent.

Informed consent was obtained from all interview participants through discussion of the project and their role in it as a participant. Due to the varied nature of the participants a different approach was taken to gaining this between the tourism industry stakeholder

interviews and the tourist interviews. Tourists were asked to give verbal consent that they were willing to take part in the research and the power relationship was more clearly balanced towards the tourists, who could easily and anonymously choose not to take part or withdraw. Tourism industry stakeholders were asked to sign a consent form which allowed discussion of any concerns regarding anonymity/confidentiality and the purposes of the research (sample in Appendix D). That the participant had given consent was taken as implied by their agreement to fill out the form, or in the case of the tourists, their willingness to answer questions. The research also involved general observation of tourists within the WHS. Given the nature of this, obtaining informed consent was not possible. The data collected was completely anonymous and related to general activities rather than the actions or words of specific individuals.

All tourism industry stakeholders interviewed were provided with detailed participant information (sample in Appendix D). This information was also available to tourist participants on request, but usually information about the project was given verbally if they were interested in knowing more. The most important details were repeated in the consent form text (sample in Appendix D). This information included details about the project, the contact details of myself as the researcher and the lead supervisor, as well as information about anonymity/confidentiality and withdrawal from the project (see section 4.7.1).

All participants had the right to withdraw during the interview or observation stage with no consequences or prejudice. Participants who had given consent to be identified, or who had given confidential rather than anonymous interviews, were informed that they could withdraw information from the research up to a month after the interview has taken place. This was to allow them time to reflect on what was said and withdraw anything they were

not comfortable with. In order to prevent damaging the research at a later date the month long time limit was used to ensure that time was not wasted on detailed analysis. Data collected from other participants was anonymised so withdrawal was not possible after the end of the interview. If any participants had chosen to withdraw, partially or wholly, then the data collected from them (or a part thereof) would have been deleted from files, but none of the participants requested this.

All participants were given the offer to find out more about the research on completion, up to and including an electronic copy of the completed thesis. Participants were also invited to attend a conference in Ironbridge Gorge where results from the project were presented (Communicating World Heritage, October 2017) and further public engagement including taking part in community events and feeding back directly to stakeholders was arranged to ensure accessible dissemination for participants.

In addition to research within the Gorge, digital materials were collected from a number of sources including travel review sites and the social media platform Instagram and care was taken to avoid unnecessarily identifying individuals or using anything which could cause harm. However, as these materials are those that have been freely posted in the public domain, and which are not covering a sensitive topic, there is considered to be little or no risk to the creators of this content. The copyright of images posted on Instagram is retained by the creator (Instagram, 2013) so explicit consent was obtained for the reproduction of images I have used in this thesis.

4.12 Conclusion

In this chapter the difficulties of investigating the communication of value, which is ephemeral, to tourists who are only temporary visitors has been discussed. The choice of

research questions and the different angles they have allowed me to take formed the first part of this chapter, followed by a discussion of why qualitative methods were chosen. The main part of this chapter has been a stage by stage explanation of the methods used, the justification for their use and the issues which arose in following them. The last part of the chapter has identified the limitations of the methods used and the ethical considerations made. Throughout this chapter reference has been made to the Appendices which include tables of information regarding the fieldwork as well as interview schedules and samples from the analytical stages.

In the chapters which precede this one the focus has been, primarily, on the work of other scholars both working broadly across relevant disciplines and in Ironbridge Gorge itself. In the remaining chapters the results of the fieldwork and analysis described here is laid out and discussed. In order to encompass the range of different perspectives and experiences which I have used as the basis for this examination of the communication of World Heritage values, the analysis has been organised into two chapters. The first, Chapter 5, focuses on how Ironbridge Gorge is constructed as a tourist destination, drawing primarily on the analysis of interviews with tourism industry stakeholders and on the digital and material culture of communication in Ironbridge Gorge. The second of the two analysis chapters, Chapter 6, complements this by looking at the ways that tourists actually encounter the site, using interviews with tourists, observation of tourist behaviour across the site and examination of tourist-produced materials posted online. In Chapter 7, the conclusion, a number of particular themes are discussed, drawing together material from across the thesis and linking this research to its wider context.

CHAPTER 5

CREATING DESTINATION IRONBRIDGE

5.1 Introduction

The modern identity of Ironbridge Gorge as a tourist destination can trace its origins back to the redevelopment of the area as part of the creation of Telford New Town. In 1961 the City Architect for Birmingham, Sheppard Fiedler, described his vision for the Gorge in these words:

> Undoubtedly the steep valleys leading down into the Severn, and the Severn Gorge itself with the famous Iron Bridge, if tidied up, could become one of the show places of England and would attract tourists on a large scale (quoted in Thomas, 1982, p1).

As discussed in Chapter 3 (see section 3.2.2), Ironbridge Gorge was set apart from the wider development of the New Town as a place of special amenity and from some of the earliest deliberations it was considered to be a potential tourist attraction. The Gorge had been a destination for tourists long before Fiedler began to re-envision it. It was famous in the late eighteenth century and was much visited as a source of awe, wonder and curiosity (see section 3.2.1). However, having fallen into economic decline from the mid-nineteenth century, it had long since diminished as a tourist attraction by the time that Fiedler remarked on its potential to become a source of income for the proposed New Town of Telford.

Many organisations and individuals were involved in transforming the dangerously unstable river valley into the landscape of heritage attractions and modern settlement that it is today. In Chapter 3 the stages of Ironbridge Gorge's evolution were outlined, forming the context

for this examination of the physical and imagined aspects of it as a tourist attraction in the present day. In the last 50 years the work of industrial archaeologists, marketing specialists, businesses and conservators has shaped the both physical appearance of this landscape and the stories layered onto it. The landscape is a palimpsest, the deep time of geological change layered with evidence of centuries of industrial extraction and manufacture, woodland planting, landslides, commercial and residential development. This landscape is also layered with stories, often disjointed and even contradictory, told by numerous narrators to a range of audiences.

This thesis examines how World Heritage values are communicated to tourists in Ironbridge Gorge. I have taken 'World Heritage values' primarily to mean the aspects of the site which are identified as being of particular significance in its SOUV, but there will also be discussion of wider conceptualisations of what World Heritage values can be in the context of tourism. This chapter attempts to answer the first of my research questions, which asks what the 'World Heritage values' of Ironbridge Gorge are and how these are formally communicated to tourists visiting the Gorge. This question aims to explore the official narratives and bodies involved in managing tourism and interpreting the site and to set the context for examining alternative narratives and creation of value in the Gorge. Additionally, I will also begin to examine the context in which tourist experience and narratives are formed, which is the focus of Chapter 6.

This chapter is about how narratives about the site's World Heritage values are produced. The first section of this chapter looks at the role of World Heritage in Ironbridge Gorge's identity as a tourist destination, discussing different perspectives from tourism industry stakeholders on what it means for Ironbridge Gorge to be a WHS. A key tension was revealed

between the inscribed OUV of the site and the image of the area that different organisations wish to portray. These issues include the perceived unattractiveness of industrial heritage and the pervasiveness of a rural imaginary in the area alongside issues relating to the iconicity of the Iron Bridge and the comparative lack of promotion of the Old Furnace. The second part of the chapter focuses on how different spaces within the Gorge have been created and how they create different stages for the tourist performances which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

5.2 Being a World Heritage destination

5.2.1 World Heritage status and Ironbridge Gorge's destination identity

Ironbridge Gorge is a WHS and a tourist destination but the relationship between these two facts is not immediately clear. It was already a tourist attraction when it was added to the World Heritage List and it was inscribed at a time when the status was still in relative infancy. In 1986 the inscription was seen by many as a crowning accolade for the Museum, an award rather than a change in status (see section 3.2.3). This somewhat confused early start has contributed to the lack of clarity among many working within the tourism industry of Ironbridge Gorge as to how World Heritage status can, or should, be used. This has a profound effect on how the World Heritage aspects of the site's values are communicated, leading to an understating of the Old Furnace and the wider industrial landscape and even, to an extent, the Iron Bridge, in favour of more general tourist appeal.

Practically, there is also a division between people involved in working with tourists and who are often the creators of the stories that tourists will encounter during their visits and those more directly involved in the management of Ironbridge Gorge as a WHS. As shown in Chapter 3 (see section 3.3.1) there are a number of organisations involved in managing

the WHS, particularly IGMT who not only operate the museum sites but are also currently acting as the WHS co-ordinator due to a service-level agreement with the local council. Another important organisation is SGCT who look after a large amount of woodland and meadows across the WHS and who have an educational role even if not operating at the scale of the museums. While IGMT are involved in both managing the WHS and dealing directly with tourists, there are a large number of other organisations and individuals who interact with tourists but who do not have this dual focus. These include the local council's own DMO, Discover Telford, the county level tourism organisation, Shropshire Tourism, and the numerous local businesses who provide services to tourists across the area. All of these organisations and individuals play a part in the construction of Ironbridge Gorge's identity as a destination.

While some are more active than others, or have a greater platform, all the different tourism industry stakeholders are engaged in the creative construction and reconstruction of stories about Ironbridge Gorge. This section explores the creation of Ironbridge Gorge's identity as a destination and how this affects the representation of the site to tourists both before and during their visits. The first aspect I want to consider is how contrasting views impact on the role of World Heritage status in Ironbridge Gorge's identity as a tourist destination. For some, it is an 'add on' to Ironbridge Gorge, something positive but with little material weight, while for others it is instead something which makes Ironbridge Gorge 'more than' other destinations.

One of the primary ways in which World Heritage status is considered as an 'add on' to the existing destination identity of Ironbridge Gorge is the perception of the status as a form of quality mark, something which was vocalised by several of the tourism industry stakeholders

I interviewed. As such, the status provides an edge over rival tourist attractions in the region, even if it is poorly understood by tourists as the intended consumers. Paul Gossage (IGMT Head of Marketing) told me that World Heritage status works like a 'Which' sticker on a washing machine; many potential buyers may not really know what it means in relation to that particular product but they know it has been endorsed as a high quality item. That tourists often don't understand the nature of the status was an idea closely associated with the perception of it as a quality mark. As Paul Gossage put it:

> The World Heritage status message is hard to convey… I suspect experienced heritage visitors…already know if they are going to like a site and therefore the World Heritage status doesn't affect them much. For someone with less knowledge then it's a quality mark.

As a result, there is a view that World Heritage is limited in marketing terms and is unlikely to translate into actual visitor appeal. This means that it is not considered to be a central message to include when promoting the area to potential tourists. As the quote above shows, Paul Gossage believes that those who are likely to be interested in the status already know that they would like to come to Ironbridge Gorge. One of the museum staff members expanded on their perspective of the status' relevance for visitors:

> People don't visit because it's a World Heritage Site. I truly believe that people aren't platformed into visiting because of it. In terms of what it means, the World Heritage Site is the museums and the area itself and its natural beauty…World Heritage is too academic…When people visit they are looking for best value, something different, an experience. Visits are driven by the Bridge, then the museums. People tend to know what's here.

Others emphasised that Ironbridge Gorge was a well-known and significant destination prior to being made a WHS so they did not believe that the status had significantly changed anything in that regard. There was also a widely quoted belief that the status was primarily something with value for international visitors rather than domestic, those who, it can be presumed, would already have heard of Ironbridge Gorge and would be, thus, unmoved. One

local business owner said that “the majority [of tourists] don’t know it is a WHS and it doesn’t matter to them anyway”. In contrast, the importance and fame of the Iron Bridge was seen as the primary motivator for people to come to the area.

World Heritage status represents the belief that a place has a shared value to all humanity. While its potential for attracting visitors is clearly disputable it might be hoped that the status would convey something qualitative about the nature of the destination. This was a view held by some of the tourism industry stakeholders who expressed their perception of the World Heritage status as something more integral to the values of it as a place. The term ‘World Heritage’ was considered to be associated with the idea of historic significance. One local official saw the status as being closely interwoven with the site’s ability to communicate its historic importance, saying that World Heritage status “enhances people’s understanding that they are looking at something historically significant. If, heaven forbid, we lost the WHS status perhaps perception of historic value would be diminished”. In their view the WHS status elevated Ironbridge Gorge from something akin to a conservation area, a place locally designated as having historic value worthy of protection and a heritage site that is worthy of visiting as a tourist. While they believed Ironbridge Gorge would remain a tourist attraction if the World Heritage status was lost, they believed that tourists would no longer be visiting to experience it as heritage, but rather simply as a pleasant place to visit. World Heritage status, the official said, indicates that there is something more to Ironbridge Gorge than being “just an old bridge”.

For several of those involved in businesses revolving around an experience rather than a more tangible product, the World Heritage status is a way of transforming the experience of the Gorge into ‘more than’ what it would otherwise have been. The angling community are

primarily drawn to Ironbridge Gorge as a place where Barbel can be caught; a fish not native to Britain and only found in a small number of rivers, including the Severn. However, a representative from the Ironbridge Angling Association told me that Barbel are not so unique that they cannot be caught elsewhere in the country. The wider appeal of Ironbridge Gorge as a destination comes from the number of other things that can be done whilst visiting, even if fishing is the primary motivation. Seeing that the site is a WHS acts as an indicator that there is more to do in the surrounding area and encourages anglers to come on a longer trip with their families rather than alone purely to fish. Similarly, a representative from Shropshire Raft Tours told me that the historical story of the Gorge and its World Heritage status is really significant for some visitors while "for others it's an added bonus: it's what makes it more than a river cruise".

It is worth reflecting on what these differing perspectives mean in relation to the nature of World Heritage values. The idea that the status acts as a quality mark implies, fundamentally, that World Heritage status is something layered on top of the narratives being communicated, rather than something integrated into the fabric of them. A term used by several of those interviewed was that World Heritage status gives Ironbridge Gorge 'kudos', a word which means praise and renown (OED, no date-c). To put it another way, "World Heritage status has weight" (Interview with local official). This is intriguing as it indicates that, for many involved in the tourism industry in the Gorge, World Heritage status is seen as something primarily derived from an external source, rather than a recognition of self-evident heritage value in this place. Underlying this is a disconnection between the UNESCO principle that WHS status is awarded in recognition of pre-existing OUV and the sense shared by many on the ground that World Heritage status is a "mysterious prestige" awarded through association with a vague external body (Interview with Shropshire guide book

author). This has a direct effect on the communication of World Heritage values as it leads to the status becoming disconnected to the values and stories it reflects.

This also raises questions relating to the significance of an external, authorising, endorsement of the heritage value of a place. According to Smith (2006), heritage is not, as it is commonly portrayed, made up of old places and things, but is, in fact, a pervasive form of cultural production, something which valorises the past and informs the commemorative performances of people in relation to it. Heritage value is created in a context where experts and official bodies dictate many of the terms; what Smith (2006, p11) calls the "Authorized Heritage Discourse" (AHD). Discussion with a museum staff member indicated the power of a well-respected heritage organisation in defining what is significant and what is not. They told me that they believe visitors associate the value of the Iron Bridge to the fact that it is looked after by English Heritage, as "they only manage important sites". The external validation of heritage significance of Ironbridge Gorge which is brought in through UNESCO World Heritage status would be the example *par excellence* of this trend, provided that tourists are aware of it (see section 6.2.1).

In addition to the ways in which World Heritage status is promoted to tourists, listing should affect how the site is experienced through the way designation influences its management. In Ironbridge Gorge the WHS status connects the different parts of the landscape as well as the organisations who manage these different parts. Ironbridge Gorge's SOUV highlights the significance not only of the major monuments but also of the ensemble of industrial features in their landscape setting, connecting the story of innovation and industry in the Gorge to the exploitation of natural resources there, and the well preserved relict landscape which is the evidence of that story (UNESCO, no date-c). Were it not for the World Heritage

status, Russel Rowley (SGCT) believed that the landscape-wide perspective of the heritage value in the Gorge would largely be lost, with the status of the Gorge underpinning the importance of having interpretation spread across the area and the research to support it. Further, it was suggested by one of the local business owners that it was a reason they would like to do more with other businesses and the museums, something others told me they were already actively doing. The WHS and its management requirements, even if not having a direct effect on tourists, indirectly affects them through encouraging businesses and museums to work together to a greater extent.

Additionally, tourists' experience of the site may be influenced by the importance given to the broader 'UNESCO World Heritage values' of authenticity and integrity as part of the management of the site as a WHS. Paul Gossage (IGMT) referred to these as 'implicit' rather than 'explicit' World Heritage values, considering that to be a strong link between the founding values of the Museum and the World Heritage status of the site. As he said:

> Education and conservation are at the heart of UNESCO and IGMT, and as a conservation and education charity authenticity and integrity, as well as conservation and education are at the heart of what IGMT is about … And the universal value of the place – this is something for everyone, this is a world changing story, place.

There is a tension between the perception that World Heritage status is something which highlights the quality of the site, its relationship to UNESCO and the worldwide network of other designated sites and the fact that the status is connected to specific aspects of Ironbridge Gorge's industrial heritage. This is particularly clear in the one space in the WHS focused explicitly on communicating the World Heritage status. This is a small exhibition located at Blists Hill, the biggest museum attraction in the site. While there is a discussion of how visitors react to this space in Chapter 6 (see section 6.2.1) it is interesting to explore how the World Heritage status and values of Ironbridge Gorge are presented here. The

exhibition is located between the Victorian Town Open Air museum and the exit and shop. Visitors walk through a brightly lit white corridor where the walls are covered with the names of WHS from around the world (Figure 5.1). The corridor then opens up into a room with a 3D landscape model of the WHS in the centre, on which is projected the story of the geology and industrial history of the site, as well as information about all the museum attractions. On one wall there is a large image of the Great Pyramid at Giza, with text taken from its SOUV and on the other there is an aerial image of Ironbridge Gorge, with equivalent text from Ironbridge Gorge's SOUV.

Figure 5.1: World Heritage exhibition at Blists Hill (photograph: Acheson, 12 April 2017)

There are 38 WHS named on the walls of the corridor, with Ironbridge Gorge located in a prominent position on the wall facing the entrance so it is one of the first names visible when going through the door. The sites listed are some of the most iconic and famous on the List, including the Pyramid fields at Memphis, Machu Pichu, the Great Barrier Reef, Angkor and

the Taj Mahal. Statistically this selection is a fairly good reflection of the List as a whole at the time of writing, although it slightly overemphasises the number of natural sites (37% in the corridor compared to 19% on the List), while understating the number of sites from Europe and North America (37% in the exhibition compared with 49% of the List) (UNESCO no date-a). However, the sites chosen are undoubtedly the most famous from the countries and regions they are drawn from. It is not surprising, for example, that it is Petra chosen from Jordan rather than Quseir Amra.

Di Giovine (2009, p9) has stated that the List is "the ultimate result of the field of heritage production" and that combination of heritage and tourism, when brought together, form what he terms the 'heritage-scape' (see section 2.4.1). Di Giovine's conceptualisation of the heritage-scape is something that expands with the inclusion of new sites, creating a linked conceptual landscape of places. However, the representation of the heritage-scape here in the World Heritage exhibition in Blists Hill is a disjointed one. The connection between Ironbridge Gorge and these other places is unexplained save through an assumption that the visitor will recognise that it is of equal value with the more famous places it is being connected to. There are difficulties with this, however. The referencing of some of the world's most iconic places leads to the common sense understanding that they are connected by their outstanding qualities, rather than their universal value to humanity. Places deemed to be outstanding in this way are, by definition, virtually incomparable, making simple juxtaposition of these places against Ironbridge Gorge confusing and a little underwhelming (see section 6.2.1).

This comparison with famous sites has been a part of the communication of Ironbridge Gorge's World Heritage status since its inscription (see section 3.2.3) and is still widely in

use for new inscriptions. For example, when the English Lake District was inscribed as a Cultural Landscape in the summer of 2017 the BBC wrote that it had "joined the likes of the Grand Canyon, the Taj Mahal and Machu Picchu by being awarded Unesco [sic] World Heritage status" (BBC, 2017b). To add an industrial example, this comparison of a newly inscribed site and the Taj Mahal and the Pyramids was something Orange (2011, p101) specifically identified as part of the trends that emerged with the inscription of the Cornish and West Devon Mining Landscape in 2006. Ironbridge Gorge sits uncomfortably alongside the Pyramids; the fact that this place 'changed the world', which is so clear to many tourism industry stakeholders, is not made explicit in many places and is easily missed. The question of whether the emphasis on outstanding over universal values found here affects tourists' perceptions of World Heritage values will be examined in Chapter 6 (see section 6.2.2).

5.2.2 Tensions between OUV and destination identity

The SOUV for Ironbridge Gorge identifies within it a number of distinct features. The overall justification for inscription is that:

> The Industrial Revolution had its 18th century roots in the Ironbridge Gorge and spread worldwide leading to some of the most far-reaching changes in human history (UNESCO, no date-c, np).

Ironbridge Gorge is a WHS because of its significance in the start of the Industrial Revolution; a representation of the innovation and change that characterised that era evidenced through the surviving structures at the Coalbrookdale Old Furnace and the Iron Bridge and the wider landscape of industrial remains when considered as an ensemble. However, it rapidly became clear from interviews with a number of tourism industry stakeholders that the industrial heritage of Ironbridge Gorge is perceived as a distinct problem for some of those involved in marketing the area. As Orange (2008, p90) has stated,

"industrial ruins are problematic public spaces", often representing difficult histories, post-industrial decline and loss, as well as contamination and instability.

Despite its significance economically and iconographically, it is clear that Ironbridge Gorge does not sit comfortably alongside the wider marketing of the area. Shropshire is firmly positioned as a beautiful, rural landscape in destination marketing terms (Interview with Simon McCloy, CEO Shropshire Tourism). Ironbridge Gorge, while an attractive wooded valley, has a historical story of intensive industrial production and is today located on the outskirts of Telford, a large town. Ironbridge Gorge does not fit the model of a rural village or market town. For Shropshire Tourism, a membership-led Destination Marketing Organisation (Shropshire Tourism, no date-c) this creates a difficult tension. They draw on research (Arkenford, 2012) that indicates that potential visitors to Shropshire are put off by the idea of industrial heritage, meaning that they either need to downplay the significance of Ironbridge Gorge as a tourist attraction or gloss over its industrial nature.

While the influence that Shropshire Tourism has on the overall portrayal of Ironbridge Gorge is not overwhelming, being only one of a number of popular websites which appear to potential tourists in a Google search, variations on this perspective were found across a range of stakeholders. IGMT, despite being the primary organisation involved in the interpretation of Ironbridge Gorge's industrial past, are also actively attempting to alter visitor preconceptions of the former industrial landscape. IGMT's core markets are young families and older nostalgia seekers and, as a result, there is a real need to combat any perceived lack of appropriateness of an industrial landscape for a family friendly or nostalgic day out. This is done through a careful re-contextualising of the industrial heritage of the Gorge into a naturalised version of itself:

> We use terms like ‘deep gorge’, ‘forested’ etc to make them think it might be pretty too (Interview with Paul Gossage, IGMT).

This makes good marketing sense but it creates a dichotomy between ‘Ironbridge then’ and ‘Ironbridge now’. Visitors can find out about the history of the area if they wish but can equally enjoy the area just for its scenic beauty and leisure activities such as walking and shopping. This sense of place is reinforced by World Heritage related planning constraints aimed at keeping Ironbridge Gorge a distinct entity and protecting it from Telford’s urban encroachment (Interview with local official). As discussed in Chapter 2 (see section 2.3.3), there is evidence that tourists find the imagery they are exposed to prior to their visit to be sometimes so powerful that it overrides their actual lived experience of places (Pocock, 2006). While marketing is not the only form of interpretation available to tourists, it is likely to be a prevailing one (see sections 5.2.3 and 6.2) making these decisions incredibly important when considering how World Heritage values are communicated.

A contrasting approach is taken by SGCT, the custodians of the ‘natural’ parts of the Gorge. For them the industrial history of the area is fundamental to the story they want to tell through their walking trails and educational activities (Interview with Russel Rowley, SGCT). Figure 5.2 shows one of the SGCT interpretation signs, located close to the Iron Bridge. It combines historic photography and maps with written storytelling to bring an otherwise erased part of the industrial landscape back into view. Other than the signage there is no evidence for the former industrial structures in what is now a picnic site. However, tourists are only likely to encounter SGCT interpretation such as this if they pick up the walking trail leaflets available around the Gorge or pass one of their signs, often located away from the busier areas of the WHS, which limits their potential reach to a particular subset of visitors. Hundreds of thousands of visitors come to the Gorge every year without visiting any of the museums

(T&W Council, 2017, p54). These visitors might well find something to connect with in the industrial story but may simply not realise its presence due to the power of the ‘rural Ironbridge’ narrative, which will be further discussed here.

Figure 5.2: SGCT signage in Bowers Yard (photograph: Acheson, 20 April 2017)

The rurality of Ironbridge Gorge is an interesting area to explore and will be discussed in more detail both in this chapter and in Chapter 6. Put simply, rurality is perceived ruralness (Woods, 2012). Watson’s (2013) concept of the ‘rural historic’, contends that there is a cultural construct which has permeated the production and experience of heritage tourism in England (see section 2.2.3). It is associated with an ‘imagined countryside’ made up of quaint villages and medieval castles. The rural historic is at the core of the way in which heritage tourism is promoted in England, which is presented as having an “all-pervasive

quaintness… populated with friendly police constables" (Watson, 2013, p105). Ironbridge Gorge, despite being described in signage across the area as the 'birthplace of industry' is simultaneously presented as a quaint and rural place and even has its own 'friendly police constable' at Blists Hill (Figure 5.3). In this context, it may be incredibly difficult to overcome a sense that industry is urban and the countryside is a place of heritage, despite the fact that Ironbridge Gorge is historically significant for the development of industry before the urban-industrial paradigm was to even emerge (Trinder, 2016). There is no historical inaccuracy in the presentation of Ironbridge Gorge's industrial remains in a woodland environment, but there may be a more problematic schism between industrial heritage and the extremely clean and nostalgic presentation of village life found in the Gorge.

Figure 5.3: 'Friendly police constable' at Blists Hill (IGMT, 2017a, reproduced with permission)

In terms of marketing Ironbridge Gorge as a landscape destination there are additional tensions relating to the focus of the destination's identity. The Iron Bridge has long been a particularly dominant element of Ironbridge Gorge's identity as a place but this means that

the wider story of the area is often obscured. The Bridge is one of the most iconic features of the whole county and within the Gorge itself its pre-eminence is clearly apparent. Interviews with those working in B&Bs and businesses within the Gorge indicated that they believe the Iron Bridge to be the main reason people come to the area, with the museums as another major draw.

With a wide range of destinations for tourists to choose from it is the history of the area and the Bridge that sets Ironbridge Gorge apart; it is why people come in the first place. As one museum staff member put it, "the Bridge is the focal point for the entire gorge and… the glue that holds it all together". The Iron Bridge has to function as the main draw for visitors, as there is little else which can be so clearly promoted. One B&B owner told me, "Ironbridge has no beaches!" and when asked why the Bridge is used on the marketing for the Ironbridge Gorge Walking Festival, the co-ordinator asked me "what other picture could you use?" In sharp contrast to the iconic status of the Iron Bridge is the humble stature of the Coalbrookdale Old Furnace, which within the SOUV is identified as having equal if not greater significance (UNESCO, no date-c). Despite this it is frequently missing from maps of the Ironbridge Gorge, or placed inaccurately. Figure 5.4 shows a digitally projected map in the World Heritage interpretation centre at Blists Hill. Whilst the museum sites and the Iron Bridge are all shown accurately, Abraham Darby I's innovations in cast iron smelting, which took place at the Old Furnace in Coalbrookdale, are represented by the location and image of the later Bedlam Furnaces.

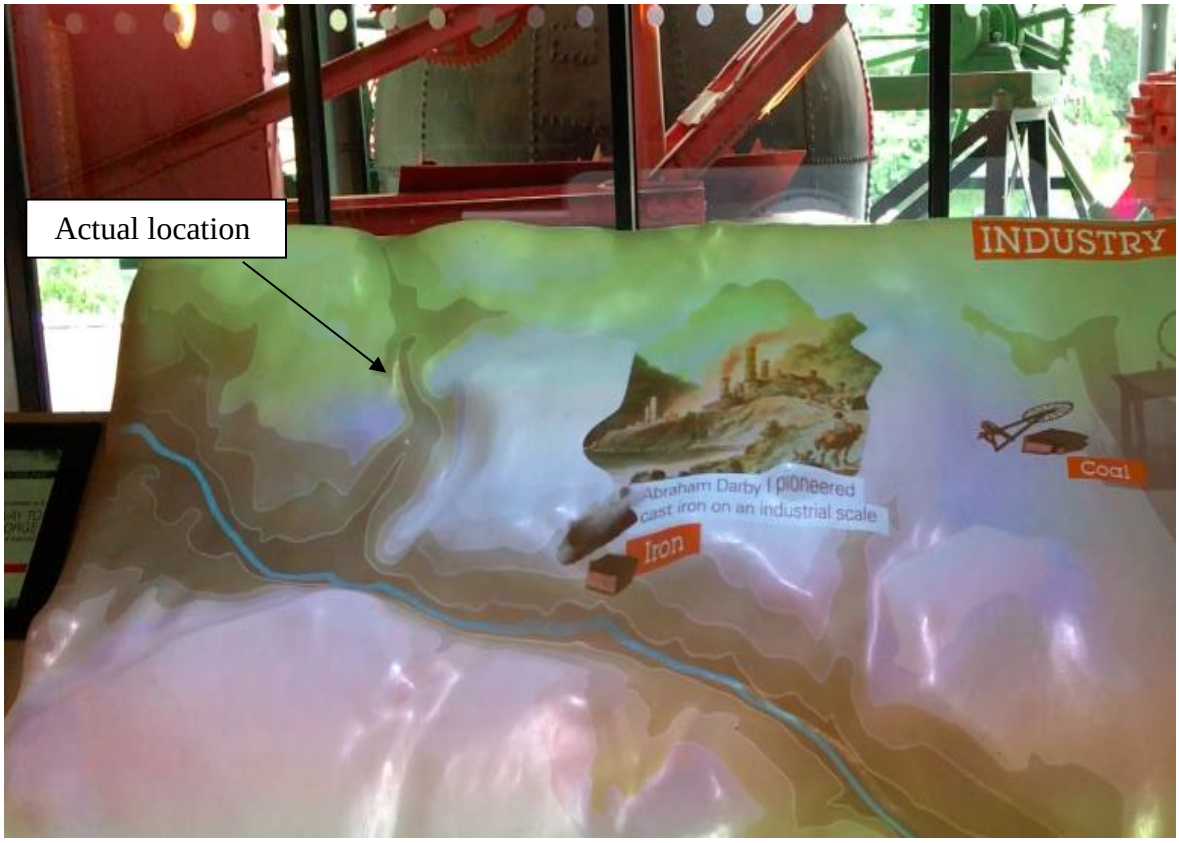

Figure 5.4: The Old Furnace mis-located on the digital map of the WHS in Blists Hill (photograph: Acheson, 29 July 2017)

The 'birthplace of industry' message is strongly communicated across IGMT's marketing, a slogan which relates directly to the developments in iron smelting which took place at the Old Furnace. However, this narrative has largely been uncoupled from the physical site. Ironbridge Gorge as a whole is portrayed as the 'birthplace of the Industrial Revolution' while the Old Furnace is presented by its physical features, such as how particular elements functioned, rather than its focusing on the far-reaching consequences of the innovations made there. Part of this no doubt stems from the fact that the Old Furnace itself is far less aesthetically pleasing and less recognisable than the Bridge. It resists becoming an icon in such a way that it is not even used to represent Coalbrookdale.

Figure 5.5 shows the Ironbridge Gorge WHS logo and the site signage in the car park at Coalbrookdale, located between the Museum of Iron and the Old Furnace (signed here as Darby Furnace). In the overall site logo, the clock tower of the Coalbrookdale Company works, which now houses the Museum of Iron, is used to represent Coalbrookdale; the same choice made on the car park signage. Despite being of at least equal significance to the Iron Bridge in World Heritage terms and considerably greater importance than the Coalport bottle kilns which are included in the logo, the Old Furnace makes no appearance. Hidden from view by an awkward cover building and largely forgotten by even the local tourism industry stakeholders, it is as if the Old Furnace itself has become completely invisible.

Figure 5.5: Left: Ironbridge Gorge WHS logo; right: Coalbrookdale signage (photograph: Acheson, 26 October 2016)

Despite its dominance over the marketing of the area the Iron Bridge is not enough to satisfy visitors for very long. Many visitors come to the Bridge, eat an ice cream and leave, thus spending very little money or time in the Gorge and meaning that little value can be communicated. The Discover Telford team commented that the over-use of the Bridge in marketing is "our responsibility", meaning all those who market Ironbridge Gorge, and diversifying the message about what Ironbridge and Telford can offer is key to getting people to stay longer. However, rather than highlighting the broader historical story of the area there is instead a focus on communicating the wider leisure appeal. Research by VisitEngland (2012) has shown that domestic tourists in England are often just looking to escape for a little while; get away from the city, go for a nice walk, have a pub lunch and drink a pint by the fire (discussed in interview with Discover Telford team).

Shopping, eating and relaxing are all reasons visitors might choose to convert a short visit into a longer stay, but that means that the historical message of the Gorge is used, inadvertently, as merely window dressing for much more generic tourist activities, or is promoted as a niche interest that only some visitors might be attracted to. The Bridge is used as a 'jump off' point to talk about antiques shopping and homemade cake, rather than its connection with the Industrial Revolution, with innovation and production, which many of tourism industry stakeholders are very happy to talk about and genuinely care about. It is not that these stories are not there to be told, but the opportunities are limited by the nature of the considerable pressure to get tourists into the area rather than going to other places. This puts the onus of interpretation heavily onto the on-site experience rather than the marketing of the area pre-visit. Once on-site, however, tourist activities tend toward the generic activities of tourists anywhere: wandering, photographing, relaxing and light hearted shopping (see section 6.3).

While the focus of the SOUV could be critiqued as focusing largely on 'great men', the inclusion of the significance of the wider industrial landscape highlights the significance of many of the alternative narratives told by 'unofficial' bodies within the site. Visitors may get an alternative to the museum-presented view of manufacturing in the Gorge if, for example, they stay at the Valley Hotel, which was the home of one of the nineteenth century industrialists, or have a conversation with the artists at the Gallery who talk about their own work in relationship to continuing the history of manufacturing in the Gorge. The issue is that with so many different storytellers and no unified understanding of what the World Heritage values of the area are, tourists are only likely to hear the stories conveyed by the most powerful voices and fragments of the wider story picked up depending on who and what they encounter during their visit.

5.2.3 Representing Destination Ironbridge Gorge

As has been identified, there are a number of organisations involved in actively creating and promoting the identity of Ironbridge Gorge as a tourist destination. In order to illustrate the themes discussed above this section uses materials produced by IGMT, Shropshire Tourism and Discover Telford to compare how the WHS is communicated by the different organisations. The representations of the Gorge that are shown are potentially an influential source of information for visitors and set the context for the ways in which the values of Ironbridge Gorge are communicated once visitors have arrived. The Shropshire Tourism website shows Ironbridge Gorge as a river valley in Shropshire, unspoilt, but with a spectacular history. Discover Telford, in contrast, portrays the area as a thriving shopping destination in the south of Telford, a place to get away from it all whilst being able to find unique things to buy, or a great place to relax with a coffee and some homemade cake, take

the family to a museum, or go cycling or kayaking. Conversely, IGMT present the area as home to 10 family friendly museums within a place layered with history, perfect for an exciting day out. These alternative identities feature many of the same motifs, but with different emphasis placed upon them, reflecting the requirements of the organisations involved in crafting and propagating them. The creation of 'destination Ironbridge Gorge' forms a foundation for tourist experience of it on arrival, so it is worth further examination.

Figure 5.6: Extract from the 2017 IGMT promotional leaflet (IGMT, 2017a, reproduced with permission)

Figure 5.6 is an extract from the 2017 leaflet produced by IGMT. For IGMT the two most important markets are young families and older couples (Interview with Paul Gossage, IGMT). This leaflet can be picked up throughout the WHS and across the region, including key interception points such as the train station and the nearest motorway service station, meaning that it reaches a wide range of potential visitors and people already visiting the area (Appendix A).

The design of the leaflet reflects the desire to entice both the family market and older visitors, using bright colours and quirky fonts alongside peaceful and beautiful photographs of the attractions. Blists Hill and Enginuity museums are given clear priority, occupying whole pages of the leaflet while the other museums share only a small amount of space. Other features of the area are merely alluded to in the map which implies that the area is more like a theme park than a river valley. The exception to this is the Iron Bridge, which is the focus of the front page and is clearly shown on the map. Surprisingly, for a significant part of the Museum's holdings and a central feature of the WHS, the Old Furnace is not shown at all. Its presence is referenced in the description of the Museum of Iron, which states that "Coalbrookdale changed the world forever" but there is no indication that there is an original structure that can be visited. The imagery used for Coalbrookdale is of the fountain and museum with an illustration of an anvil, something technologically related to blacksmithing rather than blast furnaces. The leaflet uses evocative language, inviting visitors to "Have a Revolutionary time", "Inviting Innovative Industrial" and "where will your visit take you?" which are also used on the IGMT website (IGMT, 2018). The overall impression given by this leaflet is that Ironbridge Gorge will be one of discovery and adventure, a fun day out which has the potential to be inspirational. The museums, understandably, are shown as the central aspects of the area as a tourist destination, with the landscape context and scale of the Gorge left vague. There is a clear focus on the biggest most impressive aspects of the site, including the Iron Bridge, emphasising the outstanding aspects of the OUV.

In contrast to the representation of Ironbridge Gorge promoted by IGMT, Figures 5.7 and 5.8 show the main page imagery on the Discover Telford website. Discover Telford, as the DMO operated by Telford & Wrekin (T&W) Council for the promotion of tourism to the town (TTP, 2014). Ironbridge Gorge is a major element of T&W Council's tourism offer

and has traditionally largely been the extent of it, as discussed in the interview with the T&W Council tourism team:

> Prior to Discover Telford, and still today really, Ironbridge has very much been the honeypot, but with the development of Southwater there needed to be increased profile across the wider area, and including the market towns (Newport and Wellington for example). People were coming to Ironbridge and leaving straight away so there is a need to promote longer stays (Interview with Discover Telford team).

However, with the development of the centre of Telford itself and a growing desire to 'spread the wealth' from tourism to the historic market towns which are also incorporated into Telford, there is a real need for Ironbridge Gorge to bring people in to stay rather than simply visit and leave again. By generating longer stays the potential for visitors to include other parts of Telford and the surrounding area in their visit is increased.

Both Figure 5.7 and Figure 5.8 indicate a clear focus on the Iron Bridge, but there is a definite sense that the area itself is an interesting and beautiful place beyond the Bridge. In Figure 5.8 the eye is drawn along the river and the silhouette imagery used in both webpages highlights that there are other attractions and a range of activities (running, cycling, flying and canoeing). In the text on the Ironbridge page (below), the World Heritage status of the site, and its justification as the 'birthplace of industry', are used as the foundation for a depiction of a destination which, as it says "has something for everyone" (Discover Telford, no date-b., n.p.). Ironbridge Gorge is represented as a well-rounded destination, with plenty of activities to keep a group of people with varied interests occupied for several days. The focus is very clearly on the Iron Bridge and it is even possible to read the phrase "Explore the world famous Iron Bridge in Telford's UNESCO World Heritage Site" (Discover Telford, no date-c) as implying that it is solely the Bridge rather than the wider Gorge which is inscribed on the List.

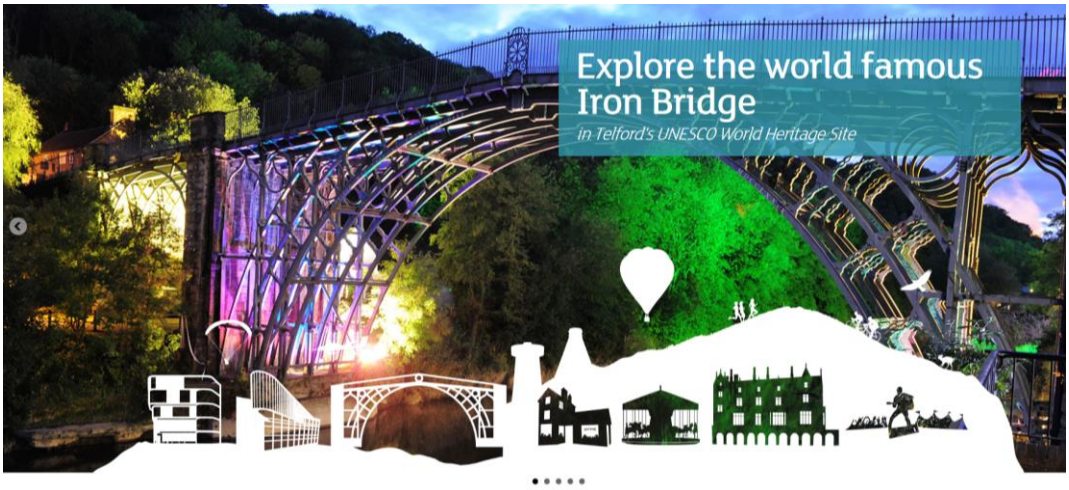

Figure 5.7: Discover Telford homepage, showing the Iron Bridge (Discover Telford, no date-c, reproduced with permission)

Figure 5.8: Discover Telford Ironbridge page (Discover Telford, no date-b, reproduced with permission)

Ironbridge. As the birthplace of the industrial revolution, and a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1986, Ironbridge is – quite literally – one of the wonders of the world and somewhere that deserves its place on everyone's must-visit list.

Whilst the ironworks, foundries, and mines that once breathed life into the valley are now silent, their place has been taken by quirky boutiques, gastro delights, and attractions to tempt old and young alike.

> From museums, monuments and buildings of historical importance, to artisan breweries, river kayak cruises, and probably the best fish and chips you've ever had, there really is *something for everyone* at Ironbridge.
>
> Walk in the footsteps of our Victorian forefathers at Blists Hill museum (and don't miss the chip shop!) Take the kids to Enginuity and let them experience science and technology hands-on like never before. Or take a stroll and explore the food stores, craft boutiques and eateries nestled alongside the beautiful River Severn.
>
> There's also a maze of footpaths, country lanes and bridleways, plus Ironbridge has earned the prestigious Walkers are Welcome status – one of just 100 places in the UK which has something special available for walkers. So come and visit. Stay. Explore. But most of all, Discover Ironbridge (Discover Telford, no date-b, italics added).

At the wider Shropshire level Ironbridge Gorge is still a major attraction, being second only to the county town of Shrewsbury in terms of visitor numbers (Interview with Tim Jenkins, Shropshire Council). The site is a recognised name thanks to decades of marketing and inclusion in numerous television programmes. Simon McCloy (Shropshire Tourism) quoted research carried out on behalf of Shropshire Tourism that indicated that most people had heard of Ironbridge Gorge, although they might not know exactly where it is. However, Shropshire as a destination brand, emphasises the quietness and rurality of the county. For Shropshire Tourism Ironbridge Gorge needs to sit within a wider portrayal of Shropshire as a rural destination.

At first glance the representation of Ironbridge Gorge by Shropshire Tourism seems very similar to that created by Discover Telford. Once again the imagery focuses on the Iron Bridge (Figure 5.9) and the area's identity as the 'birthplace of the Industrial Revolution' is clearly given precedence. However, unlike the view of the Iron Bridge used by IGMT and Discover Telford, Shropshire Tourism have chosen a view which puts the Bridge to the side, with the centre of the image focused on St Luke's Church in Ironbridge framed by trees and

with hints of a colourful shopping street. In this way it is shown as not being too dissimilar to Shrewsbury, which is presented with the slogan “Medieval Shrewsbury, a unique place to shop” (Figure 5.9). The text emphasises that Ironbridge is within the “gorgeous Severn valley”, which creates a sense of the area as part of the broader rural county. The World Heritage status is mentioned but underplayed; places which “bless the county” and of which there are two, implying that it is a fairly common designation, despite fewer than ten UK counties having more than one WHS. The 10 museums are highlighted, which fits into the message that there are wet weather things to do in Shropshire, as well as more subtly reinforcing the historical significance of the area. This portrayal of Ironbridge Gorge is rather unspecific, a part of a broader patchwork of quaint and historic towns which visitors to the county can visit. The World Heritage status is positioned in close connection to the presence of the museums, presented as a package of traditional museum and historic town based tourism not dissimilar from the tourist offer in Shrewsbury.

Figure 5.9: Contrasting imagery used for Ironbridge Gorge and Shrewsbury on the Shropshire Tourism website (Shropshire Tourism, no date-b, reproduced with permission)

The examples above show the subtly different ways in which Ironbridge Gorge is represented to potential visitors but it is interesting to further investigate what values or features are specifically used and reflect on how this compares to the OUV of the site. Using the examples discussed above I identified that there were four elements of the destination which were promoted by all three organisations (Table 5.1). These are that Ironbridge Gorge is the 'birthplace of the Industrial Revolution', that it is a WHS, that there are a number of museums, and that it is the home of the Iron Bridge, although Discover Telford only identify it as a world-famous bridge rather than as the world's first Iron Bridge.

Element	Shropshire Tourism (no date-b)	Discover Telford (no date-b and no date-c)	IGMT (2017a)
Fish and Chips		x	x
Museums are a charity			x
Lots of events			x
10 museums to visit	x		x
'World's First'	x		x
Unpoilt	x		
Walkers are Welcome		x	
Artisan breweries		x	
Industrial Revolution	x	x	x
River valley	x		
Shops and pubs	x	x	
Iron Bridge	x	x	x
Museums	x	x	x
World Heritage Site	x	x	x
Something for everyone		x	
Wonder of the world			x
Beautiful	x		x
Boat trips	x		x
Walking and cycling			x
River valley	x		

Table 5.1: Overlapping features from the dominant destination image creators

In Chapter 6, there is a discussion of tourists' perceptions of what elements of Ironbridge Gorge are particularly significant and there was clear evidence that the concepts of it as the

birthplace of the Industrial Revolution and home of the world's first Iron Bridge have been effectively communicated (see section 6.2). Many visitors were also vaguely aware that the site is a WHS, although there was often little understanding of what the status meant. I also met visitors who were confused or disappointed about the location of the museums having expected to arrive and be at 'the museum'. One visitor told me that "when you plan to come to Ironbridge Museums you expect it to be all museums but it's actually a big place and the museums are spread out over 6 miles" (Interview with tourists at the Iron Bridge, 1 July 2017).

The predominance of these elements and their parallel presence in tourist understandings of the area indicate the effectiveness of the marketing portrayals in communicating the story of Ironbridge Gorge to visitors. In terms of communicating World Heritage values, however, this only has limited effect as the messages are focused on bringing tourists in rather than interpreting the site to them. Indeed, the overall picture of the area that emerges is of a seemingly contradictory industrial and yet rural destination with the Industrial Revolution jostling with the unspoilt river valley. There are a number of features to Ironbridge Gorge's OUV (see Table 3.1). The significance of the Iron Bridge and Coalbrookdale Old Furnace, both as masterpieces of human creative genius and as evidence of developments in technology and architecture are identified, alongside the wider significance of the Gorge as a summary of industrial development and as a symbol of the Industrial Revolution. The importance of the Iron Bridge and the symbolic significance of the area in relation to the Industrial Revolution are both well represented in these examples of marketing, but the Old Furnace and the wider industrial landscape are not. The trend towards downplaying the industrial nature of the Gorge and the intriguing lack of emphasis on the Old Furnace have

already been alluded to above and, it will be seen, are significant in terms of tourists' experience of the way the site's values are communicated.

5.3 Creating Tourist Spaces

5.3.1 Ironbridge Gorge storyscape

Some visitors come to Ironbridge Gorge intending only to admire its scenery and enjoy it as a place of leisure. One company offers raft tours along the river during which the story of the Gorge is told to passengers, including its geology, its industrial history and its current manifestation as a WHS. A representative of the company told me that one of the passengers complained that it would have been a much pleasanter experience if they hadn't ruined it by talking all the way along the river! However, as somewhere valued for its heritage, Ironbridge Gorge is a place where the past looms large in its destination identity and even those who do not actively seek to learn about Ironbridge Gorge as a place will experience it through an encounter with a landscape which has been physically and interpretatively shaped to convey particular messages.

The landscape here can be described as a palimpsest. Deriving from the term for texts where the original writing has been erased and new text inscribed above, palimpsests have been used as a metaphor to examine a wide range of things where traces of something older are overlaid by more recent activity, particularly in relation to landscapes (Bender, 1993; Bailey, 2007). These ideas about the intrusion of the past into the present through the medium of the palimpsest landscape is something that lies at the heart of how many perceive heritage. In these contexts, the evidence of the past written into the landscapes we inhabit works to affect our emotions and sense of self. This is not something that just happens, however. In

Ironbridge Gorge an encounter with this evidence of temporality is the result of considerable conservation and mediation.

The highly mediated nature of many tourist encounters with Ironbridge Gorge make it not just a palimpsest but also a 'storyscape', something that Chronis (2005, p389) defines as "commercial environments where narratives are negotiated, shaped, and transformed through the interaction of producers and consumers". In Ironbridge Gorge it is not only is the OUV of the site which is derived from the stories associated with it; about its history and the people who lived and worked there, but it is also primarily through stories that visitors encounter these values. In this section the ways that Ironbridge Gorge's story and the communication of World Heritage values within it will be examined in relation to the places these stories are told and the ways in which this occurs. Particularly important in this discussion is the role of different individuals and organisations in telling these stories, as well as how the actions of these groups to conserve, manage and communicate this landscape can have an effect on tourists' experience of it, even if they are not directly engaging with these people. Not every organisation or individual has the same power to tell stories about the history and values of the Gorge, nor the same audience to tell these stories to.

The Ironbridge Gorge WHS Management Plan (T&W Council, 2017) lays out the principle that site-wide interpretation is at the heart of communicating the OUV of Ironbridge Gorge, the values from which its World Heritage status is derived:

> Interpretation across the Site will continue to be key in informing and managing visitors' knowledge and setting in context the OUV of the WHS. The WHS Festival is the premier event that celebrates the OUV of the Ironbridge Gorge. The World Heritage Site exhibition in the Blists Hill Victorian Town Visitor Centre will continue to inform visitors about the values of World Heritage Site status (T&W Council, 2017, p68).

While particular spaces are emphasised, specifically the World Heritage exhibition in Blists Hill and the temporarily transformed space of Ironbridge Gorge itself during the World Heritage Festival, there are many more places across the Gorge where interpretation takes place. Before the inscription of Ironbridge Gorge onto the List the interpretation of the Gorge's industrial story was firmly linked to the museums, which were established both to protect and communicate the story of Ironbridge Gorge (see section 3.2.2). Today the museums remain the most obvious way in which visitors can find out about the industrial history of the Gorge, but they are by no means the only one. The WHS is scattered with c.100 information signs and plaques, walking trail leaflets can be picked up from locations around the area, and there are guidebooks, events and an app which provide interpretation for visitors (Appendix A). However, all of this interpretation occurs within a landscape, a storyscape, where the combination of many aspects and agents come together to create places where communication may be particularly powerful.

5.3.2 Monumental spaces and museum spaces

There are two distinct types of tourist space within Ironbridge Gorge which are characterised by their 'heritage' identity. These are the museum spaces, often conflated by visitors as being the WHS, and the monumental spaces which are the physical manifestations of Ironbridge Gorge's historical story and the justification for its inscription on the List. In terms of what is meant by the terms 'monumental' and 'museum' space it is those areas of Ironbridge Gorge experienced by tourists which are most characteristically defined either by their museum-like qualities or their monumental ones. While the museums are more clearly self-defining, the term 'monument' requires a little more clarification. The term has specific meaning within the World Heritage context of the site, being defined by UNESCO as a

structural, sculptural, or archaeological feature which is of OUV from the point of view of history, art or science (UNESCO WHC, 1996, n.p.). By ‘monumental spaces’ I am referring to the areas which surround the features matching this description which are also visited by tourists within the Gorge. Identified examples include the Iron Bridge, the Coalbrookdale Old Furnace, the Bedlam and Blists Hill furnaces and the Hay Inclined Plane. Arguably the iconic cooling towers of the Ironbridge Power Station can also be included in this category. Their size and aesthetic qualities as well as their connection to the use of coal powered energy make them a part of the ongoing story of industry in the Gorge and their imminent demolition has led to their becoming perceived as heritage by some locals and visitors (BBC, 2017c; Interviews with tourists at the Iron Bridge, 17 June 2017; Interviews with tourists in Benthall Edge, 6 August 2017).

The monuments and the museums exist in close relationship to each other; the museums interpret and manage many of the monuments and much of the commercial operation of the museums is driven by the need to fund ongoing and future conservation of them. However, this creates a situation where the monuments are ‘staged’ as things to be admired whilst the museums are where it is envisioned that the bulk of interpretation will occur, setting the context for how tourists will encounter the monumental spaces. Edensor (1998, p45) uses the term ‘enclavic’ to describe the most highly controlled tourist spaces and, as a stage, these are the spaces where tourist performances are likely to be the most constrained. In these spaces tourists might be expected to conform to particular patterns of behaviour, such as walking and photographing in particular ways as the architecture, signage and staffing encourages them to. In Ironbridge Gorge the museums are largely enclavic spaces.

Taken together, the Ironbridge Gorge museums are designed to tell the story of the area's industrial past (Interview with Paul Gossage, IGMT). While this allows in depth storytelling closely connected to particular places within the Gorge, such as interpreting china manufacture within the China Works buildings, this means that visitors need to visit several parts of the site to acquire a coherent picture of the Gorge as a whole. Visitors are encouraged to buy a passport ticket and return to see any parts that they have missed and there are spaces within a number of the museums which give a wider overview, particularly the Museum of the Gorge. However, even if tourists do manage to visit all of the museum sites there is no guarantee that they will connect the interpretation in the museums to the wider landscape and monumental spaces beyond them. There is an imaginative divide between the museum spaces and the wider WHS which is emphasised by the way the museums are advertised as the visitor attractions in the Gorge.

The maps shown in Figure 5.10 were produced by IGMT and T&W Council. The IGMT map (inset) is a particularly extreme example, erasing the wider landscape entirely and showing a simplified version of the roads linking the museum sites as if there was nothing beyond them. While not quite so simplified, other maps, such as the cycling map produced by T&W Council under the 'Travel Telford' name, shown below, also show the museums and little else, with the topography and variation within the area smoothed into a single colour. On-site the road and finger posts reinforce this, directing visitors to the museums and the most famous monuments. While this style of orientation information is not uncommon, it acts to emphasise particular areas as targets for the tourist gaze. It is interesting to note that the Old Furnace, in World Heritage terms equal in significance to the Iron Bridge, is usually missed off these maps, as are the majority of the other monuments of the Gorge, such as the Bedlam and Blists Hill Furnaces and the Hay Inclined Plane.

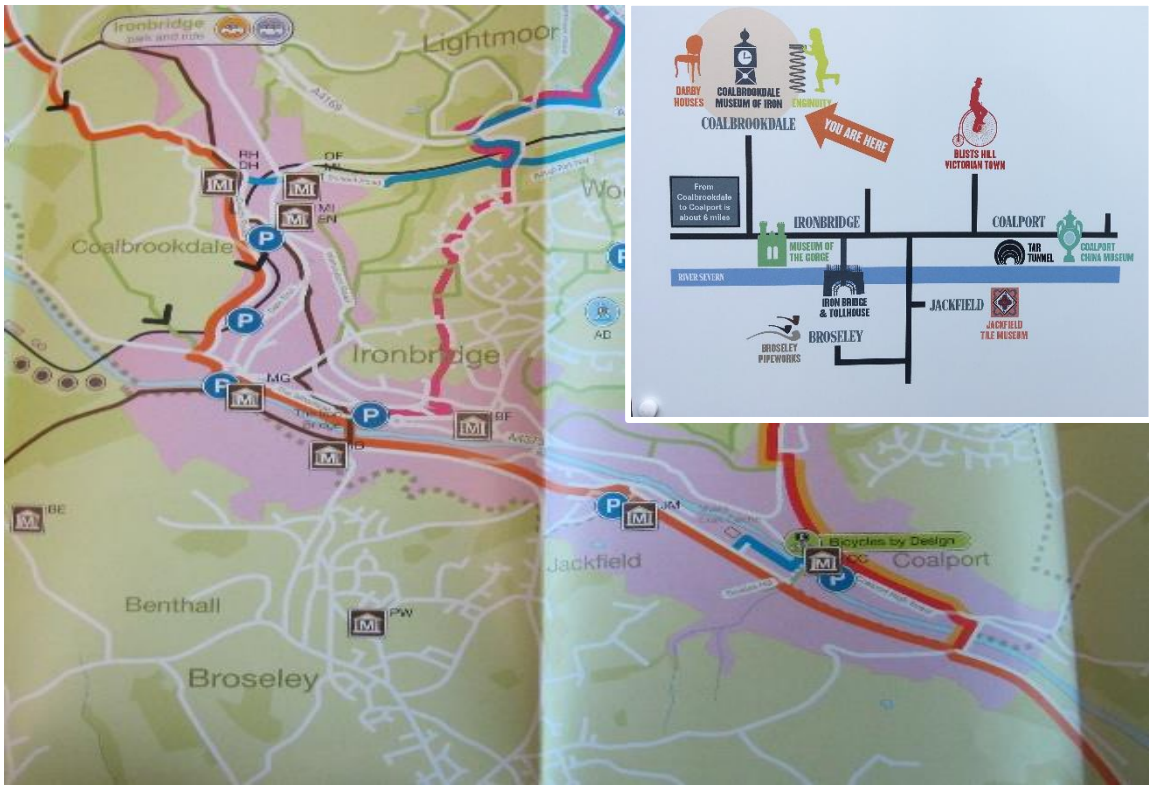

Figure 5.10: Extract from cycling map (Travel Telford, no date, reproduced with permission); inset: simplified map of Ironbridge Gorge used on IGMT signage (photograph: Acheson, 20 April 2017)

The Ironbridge Gorge museums are well known for their family friendly exhibits and were pioneers in developing more interactive museum environments (see section 3.2.2). Thus the difference in interpretation at the WHS's monuments is quite notable as this is consistently carried out through static interpretation panels. At Blists Hill Victorian Town, where costumed interpreters form the backbone of the interpretation, there are a total of nine static interpretation panels across the museum site and all but one of them relate to the *in situ* monumental features of the site, particularly the blast furnace which accounts for four of the panels. This sets them apart from the other parts of the museum which are usually interpreted by the costumed interpreters.

Out of all the monumental features in Ironbridge Gorge the Old Furnace has by far the most interpretation panels (Appendix A). While the site is located within the campus of museums which includes the Museum of Iron, where the story of ironworking in Coalbrookdale is told in detail, there are 15 static interpretation panels scattered around the Old Furnace site itself. These signs represent a significant amount of textual interpretation: to read all of it would take the average visitor around 15 minutes, if uninterrupted.[1] In Chapter 6 the ways in which tourists interact with these different spaces will be examined in detail and this facet of the monumental spaces which focuses on encouraging tourists to stand back from the feature, read about them and look at them will be shown to be a potentially significant issue in the communication of World Heritage values (see section 6.2.3).

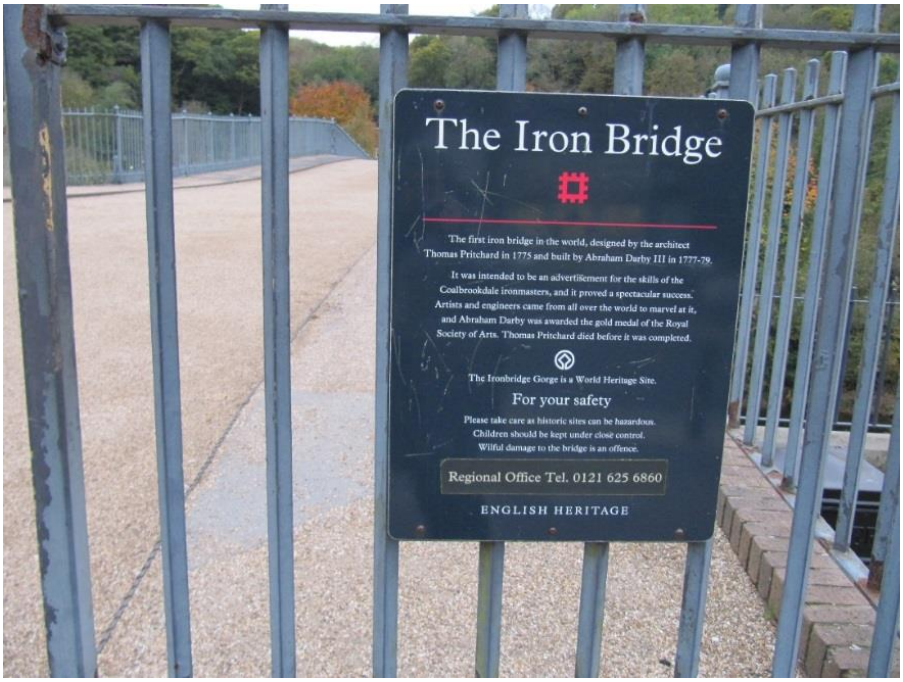

Figure 5.11: English Heritage interpretation on the Iron Bridge (photograph: Acheson, 26 October 2016)

[1] Based on an average reading speed, for a native English speaker, of c.230 words per minute (Trauzettel-Klosinski et al. 2012, p5454) and calculated from the over 3000 words of text on the panels around the Furnace.

While static interpretation panels may be text heavy and limited in their accessibility they do at least provide interpretation and the potential for the communication of World Heritage values. However, at the Iron Bridge, the most iconic and most visited of all the monuments in the WHS, there is very little interpretation available at all. There are a number of reasons for this but one particular one is the lack of clarity about who is responsible for telling the story of the Bridge. For IGMT the Iron Bridge is problematic as it is not owned by them and does not bring in any money, at least not directly. The Bridge is the most iconic feature of the area but it is not part of their museum offer. As a result, there is a tendency to shy away from the Bridge. At the same time the English Heritage Trust, who are responsible for looking after the Bridge, treat it both as a 'free site' with only very minimal sign-based interpretation (shown in Figure 5.11) and are also cautious of telling a conflicting story to that told by IGMT (Interview with Lauryn Etheridge, English Heritage).

At the Bridge there are three signs: the one depicted in Figure 5.11, one at the tollhouse museum, and another next to the war memorial which is the most prominent of the three and actually contains no information about the Bridge as it is an advert for the museums. The tollhouse museum is also used primarily as a vehicle to direct people onwards to the other museums. It has limited opening hours and there is only a small amount of heavily text based interpretation available in the inaccessible upper floor, although the museum staff are extremely knowledgable and happy to talk to visitors if they ask questions. As a result of this, the connections between the Bridge, the Coalbrookdale ironmasters and the wider landscape are rarely made and the Bridge itself is comparatively under-interpreted despite being one of the most visited parts of the area. There are guide books available, as well as a large amount of information online, but it must be acknowledged that the majority of

recreational visitors will not encounter any interpretation during their visit to the Bridge if they visit it in isolation from the museums.

The museum spaces in Ironbridge Gorge offer excellent, immersive interpretative experiences. However, the separation between the museums and the monuments, even when they are located within them, sets apart the monumental spaces encouraging visitors to admire them but not necessarily engage with their historical significance. DeSilvey (2017, p3) says that we ask monuments "to function as mnemonic devices, to remember the pasts that produced them, and to make these pasts available for our contemplation and concern". However, the values of these monuments are not self-evident, particularly given their industrial nature, which creates a divide between visitors and the structures.

5.3.3 Shopping spaces

The shopping spaces of Ironbridge Gorge are almost entirely focused on a single street in Ironbridge township, which although actually formed of several roads which continue into one another is usually grouped together and referred to as 'the Wharfage'. Alongside the museums this is the area universally considered to be tourist space, described by one local business owner as "the beaten track". Within this area shops, cafes and tourist accommodation predominate over the very small number serving the needs of the local community. In addition to the Wharfage there are other, smaller outliers of the shopping space, particularly at the interface between the museums and the areas beyond them, where the museum shops are located.

While the museums are well established tourist attractions the town of Ironbridge itself is increasingly seen as a destination in its own right, focused on a tourist offer of independent shops and relaxed eating and drinking. One business owner, who has been running

businesses along the Wharfage for over two decades, noted this as a significant change in the last few years. He associated this with the increased prosperity of Ironbridge which now has very few empty premises and hardly any charity shops, a sharp contrast to how it was in the 1990s. The prosperity of Ironbridge today, which has made it an attractive place for middle class British visitors to wander around and drink coffee, cannot be separated from the conservation efforts and tourism development of the 1970s and '80s. This was focused on preserving the industrial heritage of the area. Further, some see the modern independent businesses as a counterpart for the historically significant stories of eighteenth century entrepreneurialism and innovation (Interview with local business owner). Being able to buy from someone who owns their own business is a part of the wider Ironbridge experience and destination that can feed in to a broader picture of it as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution.

The shopping spaces are not intentionally focused on communicating World Heritage, or any other kind, of heritage value. However, heritage or at least a valorisation of a sense of the past, is an important part of the town of Ironbridge Gorge's identity as a destination if not necessarily industrial heritage. It encapsulates the imaginary of an idealised rural town, with the industrial features of the area often toned down or transformed. For example, the former warehouses located at the western end of the Wharfage are, today, a museum, an outlet for handmade teddy bears, an art gallery, vintage clothing shop, and antiques shop with tearoom. Moving along the Wharfage there are potentially numerous indicators of its industrial past, such as an old lime kiln shown in Figure 5.12, but these are not signposted in any obvious way making them only legible to those already knowledgeable about industrial history. Thus it is a more general sense of old buildings rather than specifically industrial heritage which is conveyed.

Figure 5.12: Lime kiln on the Wharfage located at the end of a car park and unsigned (photograph: Acheson, 23 May 2016)

Despite this, there are potentially several ways in which the dominant tourist activities in the shopping space of Ironbridge Gorge could result in the communication of value. Shopping is noted as the number one tourist activity in the Gorge (Interview with Simon McCloy, Shropshire Tourism), and souvenir shopping and purchasing can be a highly significant tourist practice. Rory Hunter, IGMT Commercial Manager, has a strong sense of the role of souvenirs in telling the story of the Gorge. He identified that souvenirs are bought for three reasons: as a gift, as a memory cue and as evidence of travel. These souvenirs continue to tell stories once they are off site; even a pen can serve as a cue to tell a person far away about Ironbridge Gorge. He recognised that souvenirs tell stories through other people's eyes; they can represent things that could never be conceived by IGMT, such as a holiday to a foreign country encapsulated in a piece of Blists Hill iron (Figure 5.13).

Figure 5.13: IGMT advert for iron souvenirs (photograph: Acheson, 3 November 2016)

There are two particular aspects of Ironbridge Gorge's OUV which are specifically connected to shopping in the Gorge: the importance of the Iron Bridge and the ensemble significance of the industrial landscape. The Iron Bridge is a central feature of many items aimed at the tourist market. This reinforces its iconicity, as well as highlighting the disparity between the perceived significance of the Bridge and the absence of the Old Furnace, as discussed above. There are mixed opinions in the Gorge as to the significance that having a picture of the Bridge emblazoned on a product will give to its attractiveness to customers. Rory Hunter (IGMT) referred to this as the myth that "if you stick a bridge on it, it will sell". The prevalence of this idea is clear, however, and was reflected directly in an interview with one museum staff member who said that "the Bridge is iconic. If you want to sell souvenirs it has to have the Bridge, that's what people want to buy". While the Iron Bridge forms the focus of only one of the three IGMT product lines, it is used widely across the Gorge beyond the museums. It can be found in company logos, signage, and the subject for many of the

products. One can buy sweets, postcards and small gifts with the image of the Bridge in most shops and the image of the Bridge is used on signage across the area (Figure 5.14). Other businesses make reference to the views of the Bridge as part of their hospitality offer, such as Bridge View Guesthouse, or the Vaults, which claims to have the best view of the Bridge available (The Vaults, no date).

Figure 5.14: Left: Iron Bridge range of products in museum gift shop (photograph: Acheson, 3 November 2016); right: example of the Iron Bridge on a local business' window (photograph: Acheson, 17 October 2016)

The wider industrial landscape, and the stories of those industries, is a more subtle part of the shopping experience, but perhaps a more meaningful one for all of that. This relates to the availability of objects which have been made within the Gorge, often in ways which reflect and interweave with historical working practices. There are numerous artists working in ceramics and glass, as well as those who draw on the industrial features of the landscape for inspiration. Overt references to the iron and ceramic making industries of the Gorge are made in the sale of particular items widely available in the Gorge, such as decorative tiles or cast iron. One of the product lines sold in the museum shops is 'Made in the Gorge' which

includes glassware and ceramics as well as local art work. Rory Hunter (IGMT) stated that products made in the Gorge using these traditional skills allow people to form a deeper connection with it as a place.

However, no matter how industrial the origins of the process by which many of these items are made, there is no avoiding the fact that artisan craft production is not a true representation of the mass production that Ironbridge Gorge is historically significant for. Further, many of the items on sale have a domestic focus. Ironware is available, but it is usually cookware, and ceramic tiles can be bought in the gift shops for use as pot stands. Alternatively, the items may serve no practical use at all and may be sold as art works. In this context, it is difficult to tell whether shopping for these items reinforces the wider narratives of industry in the region, or if it instead reinforces the ruralised, highly conserved vision of it, which makes it appear to be a beautiful place to live where one can imagine using these idealised domestic items.

Overall, many of the shopping spaces in Ironbridge Gorge emphasise a strong connection to the past. Some of the spaces fit more easily with the communication of World Heritage values with their industrial feel and educational souvenirs. However, this is not to diminish the effects that traditional souvenir purchasing can have in encouraging visitors to make a connection with a place. One of the Ironbridge business owners commented that people seem to want to buy the same sort of things they would have bought when they were children on a school trip. They thought this odd; that grown adults would still be entranced by erasers and bookmarks, but in a way there is something about the childlike selection of small tokenistic items that is rather joyful and tourism is, fundamentally, about leisure and fun. It is in the collection of these small and not materially significant items that visitors can layer

their own meanings and memories, as well as transmit them to family and friends through using them as small gifts.

5.3.4 Rurality and conservation in natural spaces

Another area of the Ironbridge Gorge landscape which forms a tourist space, although to a lesser extent than the others discussed above, are the woodlands and meadows which fall under the management of the SGCT. I have grouped these as 'natural spaces', not because they are natural in the pure sense, as they are all areas which have been heavily influenced by human activity both now and in the past, but as it is their naturalness which defines them in terms of tourist engagement with them. While far less busy with tourists the natural spaces are very important for the way in which Ironbridge Gorge has developed as a tourist attraction and are central to how an imaginary of rurality, as discussed above, has emerged in parallel to the narratives of its industrial heritage.

Ironbridge Gorge's woodlands are both full of industrial remains and are themselves a product of historical practices. Some types of practices, such as coppicing and charcoal burning, as well as the laying out of ornamental walks for workers by one of the iron masters in Coalbrookdale (Devlin, 2018), left relatively light traces. However, the abandoned mines, quarries and ruined works that cover the landscape meant that these woodlands were in a seriously unstable and dangerous state by the middle of the twentieth century. They were certainly the kind of environment that could be categorised as 'edgelands'; spaces found on the outskirts of shopping areas, such as municipal dumps, old canals, scrub woodland and the ruins of old industry (Shoard, 2002). These are the areas which Mabey (1973, p11) referred to as "unofficial countryside", not those spaces which conform to the imaginary

‘rural-historic’ ideal which, as discussed above, have become so influential in the way Ironbridge Gorge is marketed to visitors (Watson, 2013).

In Chapter 3 (see section 3.2.2) the processes by which Telford New Town was established were discussed. This included the large scale redevelopment of the Ironbridge Gorge landscape. The area around Ironbridge, an area not coincidentally equivalent to what was to become enclosed by the WHS boundary, was included in the Master Plan to be an area of special amenity heavily weighted towards woodland and open spaces. White (2016, p216) has argued that this was a direct result of the sheer size of the task facing anyone attempting to clean up the area. With other potential uses ruled out Ironbridge Gorge was designated as a place for leisure and recreation and hopes were placed on it becoming a tourist attraction of national or international significance in the future (Thomas, 1982; de Soissons, 1991). The former industrial woodlands entered a new phase of usage, transitioning from a productive to a recreational space.

If Ironbridge Gorge was inscribed on the List today it would probably be inscribed as a Cultural Landscape and indeed, had the development of the New Town not cleared evidence of industry across the East Shropshire Coalfield this hypothetical inscription might cover a much larger area (White, 2016, p214). However, as the category of Cultural Landscape did not exist in 1986 the significance of the wider industrial landscape of the Gorge was recognised through criterion iv as “an outstanding example of a… landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history” (UNESCO WHC, 2017, p26). The SOUV states that:

> Ironbridge Gorge provides a fascinating summary of the development of an industrial region in modern times. Mining centres, transformation industries, manufacturing plants, workers' quarters, and transport networks are sufficiently

> well preserved to make up a coherent ensemble whose educational potential is considerable (UNESCO no date-c, n.p.).

This gave the industrial landscape of the Gorge parity, in terms of World Heritage value, with the Iron Bridge and the Old Furnace. However, the management of the woodlands and meadows of the Gorge, where much of this industrial landscape is preserved, was given over to SGCT rather than IGMT when the Telford Development Corporation was wound up. Interpretation of this industrial landscape for visitors is done largely through static interpretation panels and walking trail leaflets. In contrast to the museum-centric representation of the area shown commonly in maps of the Gorge (Figure 5.10), SGCT prioritise the physical landscape features, emphasising the woodlands and topography (Figure 5.15).

Figure 5.15: SGCT map of the Gorge (SGCT, no date, reproduced with permission)

This difference in approach comes from a desire to broaden the tourist experience of Ironbridge Gorge to include an understanding of the landscape context of the monuments, settlements and museums as well as making it easier for visitors to orientate themselves within the Gorge (Interview with Russel Rowley, SGCT). However, the divide between the management of the museums and the management of the woodlands and meadows is apparent in the division of interpretation. The well-interpreted wider landscape of the Gorge is rarely mentioned by the museums and as SGCT, in contrast, have no budget for marketing, all of their interpretation is 'on the ground' through leaflet walking trails and signage. This means if you do not see it physically you may not find out about it (see Table 3.3, Appendix A).

The woodland areas of Ironbridge Gorge are included in the promotion of the area by the Discover Telford brand, but their focus is on the woodland areas as recreational spaces; perfect for cycling, walking and horse-riding (Discover Telford, no date-b). While there is no reason why 'outdoor pursuits' should not happen in a landscape of mines, ruins of factories and works and so on, the portrayal of these areas to incoming visitors is all about their current experience rather than their history, while those visitors actively engaging with the history of the area through the museums are not signposted towards them either. The result of this is that the industrial story of these natural spaces is not easily recognisable, something which is further confused by the way in which they are deliberately ruralised by those marketing the area. Either through the use of narrative devices such as, 'reclaimed by nature', or 'unspoiled woodlands' the industrial history of these spaces has been carefully, but comprehensively, disguised. As has been discussed above, Ironbridge Gorge has become characterised by rurality, and the presentation of the woodlands is fundamental to this.

The ruralisation of Ironbridge Gorge is not restricted to its natural spaces; in the shopping spaces there is a distinctly nostalgic atmosphere closely associated with a rural imaginary, as has been discussed above. In both the shopping and natural spaces of the Gorge the transformation of the former industrial settlements and edgelands into their current form has been closely linked to processes of conservation. As Ironbridge Gorge has been stabilised, conserved and repaired it has become more closely aligned with a familiar English countryside aesthetic, a quaint village far from the pressures of urban life. As Tim Jenkins (Partnership and Economic Strategy Manager, Shropshire County Council), put it: "that's one of the big successes of the WHS: it was a wasteland fifty years ago and it's a beautiful place now".

This process began long before Ironbridge Gorge was inscribed onto the List but it has been reinforced by it, not only in emphasising the importance of conservation but also through the creation of the distinct physical place which is Ironbridge Gorge. The WHS boundary, while not physical, creates an enclosed imaginative space which sets apart the landscape feature of the Severn Gorge and two of its tributary valleys. Although there is no line or wall denoting its presence, the boundary acts in a number of ways to cement the identity of the Gorge as a physically distinct place. While not directly relevant to tourists these boundaries are communicated to them in the ways that the area is shown on orientation maps and by the signs which inform them that they are entering the WHS (Figures 5.10 and 5.16). The implication is that there are things which are within the WHS, and there are things which are not.

Figure 5.16: Road-sign at the boundary of the WHS (photograph: Acheson, 20 February 2016)

The distinctive 'feel' within the boundary is also something directly produced in relation to the World Heritage status of the site. This is done through planning policy, which creates strict regulations on what can and cannot be done within the WHS itself and which also acts to prevent the urban spread of Telford into the vicinity of the Gorge (Interview with local official), creating a physically distinct boundary between areas acknowledged as urban, and the Gorge which is presented as rural.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the ways in which tourism industry stakeholders have attempted to shape the Ironbridge Gorge destination into an attractive tourist product and the results that those, and numerous others', actions over time have had on the creation of a landscape of tourist spaces across the WHS. These two aspects, one focused on the realm of the imaginary and the other on the effects of layering that imaginary onto a physical place cannot

be easily separated from one another, or indeed from their lived experience which is the focus of Chapter 6. The communication of value is an ephemeral thing; something involving not just the transferral of information but a process which invites the receiver of that information to engage in valorisation themselves. By investigating the imaginaries of a place it is possible to shine a light into the effect of particular stories and representations on how tourists perceive the place, something which forms the context for the examination of tourists' engagement with the values of Ironbridge Gorge in Chapter 6.

One particular aspect of Ironbridge Gorge as a destination is its status as a WHS. For many involved in promoting Ironbridge Gorge to potential tourists this is little more than a quality mark. Further it was revealed that there is widespread unease about highlighting the significance of Ironbridge Gorge's industrial history due to the fear that it is off-putting for many who might otherwise want to visit the area. Instead the industrial parts of the Ironbridge Gorge story are encoded into communication about the museums, knowing that those who are interested in industrial heritage will already be interested in visiting and those who are not will not necessarily associate negative perceptions of industry with museums. As a result, it is possible to question whether World Heritage has any significant role in the tourism imaginaries of Ironbridge Gorge, either as a place of OUV resulting from its industrial remains, or as part of a world-wide community of UNESCO endorsed sites. In Chapter 6 tourists' understandings of World Heritage status and the nature of OUV will be examined further (see section 6.2).

Looking deeper, however, it is clear that the processes of heritage, especially the decades of conservation work and promotion of tourism to come and visit these sites, has resulted in a transformation of Ironbridge Gorge both as a destination and as a storyscape. Attempts by

marketers to promote an alternative narrative of the Gorge as a place reclaimed by nature would not have been successful if there was not a conventionally beautiful landscape to visit. The resulting tension between stories which appear, at a surface level, to be contradictory, is a difficult problem. It would be possible to consider that the protection of the integrity of Ironbridge Gorge and its industrial remains has led to an erosion of its authenticity, an event closely associated with a broader trend, emerging since the nineteenth century, which erases the reality of the country's industrial past in favour of an imagined 'rural historic' (Watson, 2013; see section 2.2.3 and 5.2.2). However, the sheer size and iconicity of some of the industrial features in Ironbridge Gorge, particularly the Iron Bridge and the surviving blast furnaces, in addition to a large number of museums dedicated to interpreting these remains, mean that a visit to Ironbridge Gorge can provide an immersion in an alternative story to that most commonly found in its promotional literature. Ultimately it is the iconicity of the Iron Bridge that is the most powerful image of the Gorge, an image which while frequently presented in a rural context, cannot fail to communicate something of the audacity and innovation of the eighteenth century.

The power of the Iron Bridge in the imaginary of Ironbridge Gorge is in sharp contrast to the absence of the Old Furnace. The significance of the Furnace as the 'birthplace of the Industrial Revolution' has been subsumed into the wider marketing of the area in a way that is uncoupled from the remains of the structure itself. Similarly, the industrial landscape of Ironbridge Gorge has been smoothed over by a layer of rural features; becoming a series of quaint villages in a beautiful river valley. While the story of industry is told through the museums there is an overarching trend towards communicating Ironbridge Gorge as a rural destination with a nostalgic and generic past rather than a dramatic industrial one. Where the

industrial elements of the story are promoted their power is diminished by the absence of a coherent site-wide narrative connecting all the individual elements.

In some ways it is possible to say that Ironbridge Gorge is at once both ordinary and extraordinary. As a WHS it has been given equal status to some of the most famous places in the world, but, as Simon McCloy stated "Ironbridge is iconic, but not anything like the Taj Mahal or the Pyramids", therein revealing one of the biggest challenges for Ironbridge Gorge as a WHS and a tourist destination. The designation is closely associated with some of the world's most recognisable tourist destinations; sites that are often synonymous with the nations they are located within. No matter how great the value attributed to Ironbridge Gorge is, it is likely that it will always suffer in comparison with sites considered to be 'wonders of the world'. Ironbridge Gorge's claim to OUV marks it out as globally significant, and it arguably is more significant than many more visually impressive places. Indeed, Pocock (1997) claimed that Ironbridge Gorge is one of only a very small number of WHS that can truly claim to possess universal value, as there are very few people on the planet who have been untouched by industrialisation. However, for many of those who visit, and certainly in the minds of many of those who market it, the disparity between this unassuming river gorge and, for example, the Grand Canyon, is too much of a dichotomy to hold together. For Ironbridge Gorge, in this instance, World Heritage status may simultaneously be too big an identity to use easily, while at the same time being considered as too narrow to bring in sufficient visitors.

In this chapter I have discussed how World Heritage values are communicated to tourists showing that the World Heritage values of Ironbridge Gorge form only one part of the multiple and sometimes contradictory narratives communicated to visitors. These narratives

are communicated in a number of different ways, most directly through the museums and formal interpretative signage, but also through informal contact between tourists and other tourism stakeholders, through marketing and through the subtle linking of Ironbridge Gorge to well-known tropes about England's past and rural identity. As a destination Ironbridge Gorge is a mix of 'day out' attraction, appearing to be full of family-friendly museums activities and a quaint, rural place to visit focused on shopping, leisurely walking and sight-seeing. This variety of identities and the different organisations and individuals involved in creating them, means that there are distinctly different tourist spaces layered onto the physical valley. These encourage certain types of tourist performances over others, meaning that the communication of World Heritage value, if it is occurring, must do so in different ways across these spaces. In the following chapter the ways in which tourists engage with these spaces will be examined, forming a counterpart to this one where the context for that engagement has been the focus.

CHAPTER 6

TOURIST ENCOUNTERS WITH IRONBRIDGE GORGE

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5 the ways in which the values of Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site are communicated to tourists were examined, showing that this varies considerably across the site and in the different mediums used to present information to visitors. This is further complicated by the fact that tourists' experience is one which is ultimately produced by the tourists themselves (Bærenholdt et al, 2004). Through an examination of tourist narratives and performances this chapter explores how individual tourists encounter the World Heritage values of the site and how they engage with them. It particularly addresses the second and third of the research questions, which ask how tourists experience the site, how variation in activity and location affect encounters with formal narrations of value, and how tourists, in turn, represent the values of the site in their own narratives. This chapter will complement the discussion of how those working to manage tourism contribute to the ongoing construction of the place and its values which formed the focus of Chapter 5.

The chapter begins with a study of what tourist narratives reveal about how individual tourists understand and engage with the World Heritage values of the site. This looks at different understandings of the nature of World Heritage designation as a status and perceptions about the relative importance of different aspects of the Gorge as a destination. This forms a contrast with the ways in which these aspects are represented in officially produced materials revealing a lack of depth in the majority of tourists' understanding of the site and prompting the question of whether this is something deeply connected to the nature

of tourism and World Heritage and thus likely to occur more widely, or if it relates to more site-specific trends. The second section of the chapter is a study of the nature of tourist performances in Ironbridge Gorge, which examines the context tourist narratives are being formed within. Four different categories of tourist performances are identified, allowing reflection on the connections between intention and the structuring effects of the site, its management and broader tropes of tourism in creating intimacy or reinforcing distance. Following on from this is a study of tourist photography, an activity relating to both performance and narrative. This is based on both observation of tourists as photographers and examination of tourist-produced photographs shared on the online platform Instagram.

6.2 Tourist narratives

6.2.1 Talking about World Heritage

This thesis examines how World Heritage values are communicated to tourists in Ironbridge Gorge, looking at the ways in which the OUVs of the site contribute to the construction of it as a tourist destination (see Chapter 5) and how tourists then encounter and negotiate these values. One of the research questions created in order to address this looks at how World Heritage values are incorporated into tourist narratives of the site. Tourist narratives can reveal if values have been communicated, providing evidence that an individual has been brought into actively ascribing those values for themselves, are unaware of these values, or have alternative views on the significance of the site. To investigate this, I used interviews with tourists in parallel with examination of tourist-produced narratives shared online on Trip Advisor (see Chapter 4). Through this analysis a number of themes began to emerge relating to perceptions of the World Heritage status itself, as well as the values of the site both in line with the ascribed OUV and with wider perceptions of value.

> "I think I've heard of it [World Heritage], but I don't know exactly what it means. I guess it's about keeping places like this running"
>
> "I don't know what that means though - I guess it means it's old"
>
> (Interviews with tourists at Blists Hill, 29 July 2017 and 9 August 2017)

In Chapter 5 (see section 5.2.1), it was shown that World Heritage status is largely considered as a quality mark to tourism industry stakeholders in Ironbridge Gorge, a mysterious prestige conveying something vaguely historic about the area, or an indication that there is more for tourists to do. Interviews with tourists showed that the World Heritage status of the site is not well understood, with the majority of those I interviewed either not knowing that the site was designated as a WHS or having only a vague understanding of what it meant, if they were actually aware of it. This is broadly in line with research at other WHSs (see section 2.4.3) where considerable numbers of visitors were either completely unaware of the status of the site or knew of it but did not understand it (Poria et al, 2011; Palau-Saumell et al 2012). In contrast there were a wide range of ideas about why Ironbridge Gorge is considered to be important including perspectives relating to the international significance of the site, understandings of World Heritage as a management or organisational concept and views of it as relating to a vague sense of the site as a historic place.

One of the first issues to investigate in relation to the communication of World Heritage values is whether tourists actually understand what the designation means. Several of the tourists I interviewed assumed World Heritage was either part of, or similar to the British heritage organisation the National Trust (Interview with tourists on the Iron Bridge, 17 June 2017 and 10 August 2017). This implies that, for these individuals at least, World Heritage was understood to be a British designation rather than an international one. The sense that World Heritage was a national level designation or management structure was reflected in a conversation I had with a visitor who told me about how impressed they were that Swansea

would also soon be a WHS (Interviews with tourists at Blists Hill, 28 July 2017). While I initially thought they might be conflating the separate UNESCO designation of Creative Cities with World Heritage, I subsequently discovered that they were referring to the bid for Swansea to become the UK's City of Culture for 2021 (Swansea Council, 2017). For this visitor World Heritage was seen to be synonymous with a national designation of limited duration.

Not all visitors were unaware of the idea that World Heritage derives from apparent global level significance. One visitor told me that the status was given "because it's [Ironbridge Gorge] of interest to the whole world, because it shaped world history, not just local" (Interviews with tourists at the Old Furnace, 3 August 2017), while another stated that "I guess that it's famous all over the world; it has to be known outside of this country, not national heritage" (Interviews with tourists at Blists Hill 27 July 2017). Others, however, commented on significance in less universal terms, saying things such as that "it's of national interest, to be looked after for future generations" (Interviews with tourists at the Old Furnace, 3 August 2017) and that Ironbridge Gorge is an "area of natural beauty, oh and something to do with British history" (Interviews with tourists at the Iron Bridge, 27 May 2017).

This disconnection between the idea that Ironbridge Gorge is globally significant and the regional or national level of value assumed by some visitors leads to confusion and frustration in spaces where the global value of the site is being communicated. I interviewed visitors in the World Heritage exhibition space at Blists Hill Victorian Town (Figure 6.1). A significant majority of visitors walk straight through the space, not stopping to look at any of the interpretation panels or the 3D landscape map. Even among those who do stop there

is often confusion about what the exhibition is attempting to convey. For example, one couple who had been looking at the large image of the Pyramid at Giza told me they didn't understand why it was there, saying that "Ironbridge is different to places like the Sphinx isn't it" (Interviews with tourists at Blists Hill 28 July 2017). Another family had spent some time talking to their children about the sites named in the corridor:

> We were explaining to the kids that they [names in corridor] are all World Heritage Sites - all these incredible places - and a bridge! It doesn't really compare against the Great Barrier Reef does it?! (Interview with tourists at Blists Hill 28 July 2017).

In Chapter 5, (section 5.2.1) there was a discussion of how Ironbridge Gorge's values are presented in the exhibition through their implied similarity with other inscribed sites. As the quote above shows, the use of this seems to be more confusing than effective.

Figure 6.1: The World Heritage exhibition at Blists Hill (photograph: Acheson, 28 July 2017)

A common response to questions about what it means to be a WHS, or why specifically Ironbridge Gorge is listed, was to express some fairly vague impressions of the importance of the past, often tied up with ideas relating to nostalgia and 'heritage' in its most generic sense. People I spoke to summed up their perception of the significance of Ironbridge Gorge as "it's historic", or words to that effect. When I attempted to get them to expand on this, responses were often vague: "well it's the age of the buildings round here, how things used to be done", "it's traditional", or "it's heritage" (Interviews with tourists at the Iron Bridge and Blists Hill, 27 July 2017, 9 August 2017 and 10 August 2017). Further, there were indications that the vague historical past represented in Ironbridge Gorge is a Victorian one. In part, this is likely to be a misunderstanding resulting from the prominence of Blists Hill Victorian Town in the marketing of the area, something not helped by representations of the eighteenth century Iron Bridge with captions such as the one shown in Figure 6.2.

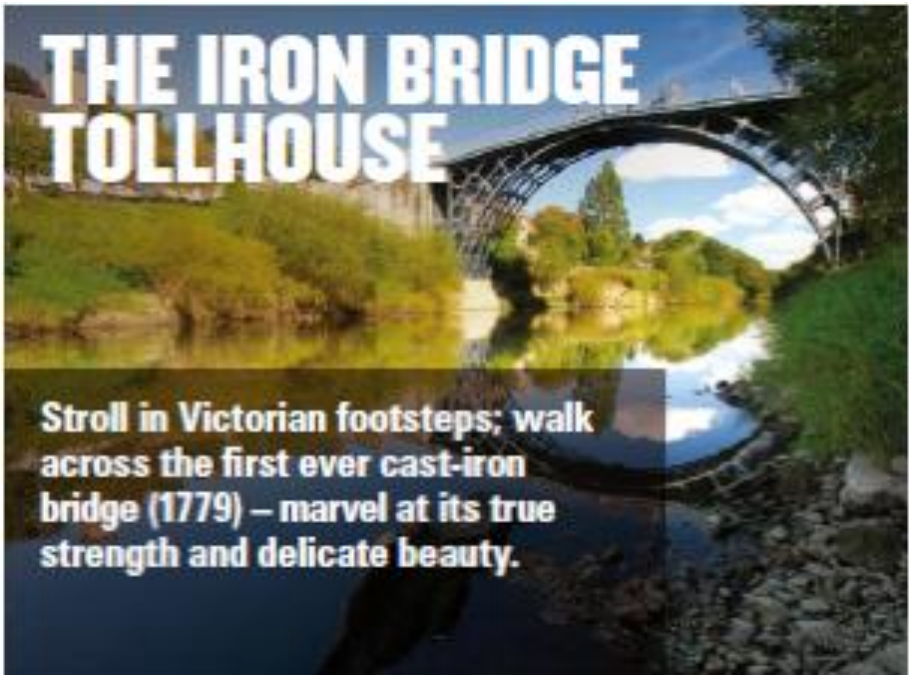

Figure 6.2: Image and caption from a promotional leaflet (IGMT, 2016, reproduced with permission)

Taken together with numerous generically ‘quaint’ shops and cafes it is possible to say that Ironbridge Gorge is what Urry and Larsen (2011, p125) describe as a “themed space”. This is a layering of imaginative tropes onto a place, which constrains the way in which they are framed, and thus encountered, by tourists. The OUVs of Ironbridge Gorge relate not only to features which significantly predate the Victorian era, but also are about specific understandings of the importance of particular aspects of the Gorge in relation to the development of the Industrial Revolution. Touristic participation in the construction of narratives connecting Ironbridge Gorge to a vague sense of the Victorian era is actually in active opposition to the communication of World Heritage values.

In contrast to those visitors who understood World Heritage status as being related to some level of significance, whether vaguely historic or internationally important, other visitors understood the status in organisational terms. Some considered it to be something related to the museums in the area specifically, rather than the wider industrial landscape that the museums help interpret, as the quotations below demonstrate. These responses reflect a decoupling of World Heritage status and an understanding that it is based on an acknowledged set of values that the site is considered to possess. In the case of Ironbridge Gorge the OUV is derived from the significance of the industrial innovations which took place here but a substantial number of tourists conflated the work of the museums with the source of the heritage value.

> “I only vaguely know it’s a WHS, but we’re doing all of the sites - we were at Blists Hill yesterday and came over here [Museum of the Gorge] today” (Interview with tourists at the Old Furnace, 3 August 2017).

> “I guess it’s [on the World Heritage List] because of all the rooms here, and the blast furnaces” (Interview with tourists at Blists Hill, 9 August 2017).

A number of visitors referred to ideas about World Heritage status being a forward-looking designation, focused on conservation rather than reflecting the specific values of an individual place. This is particularly interesting as, whilst not something especially communicated on site, this aligns closely with the original reasoning behind the Convention (see section 2.4.1). Some visitors phrased their ideas in terms of protecting heritage against loss, for instance one told me "it's really unusual and it would be terrible to lose it" (Interviews with tourists at the Iron Bridge, 17 June 2017). For others the designation was linked to appropriately looking after sites in the present, saying things such as "I guess they want to look after it properly" (Interviews with tourists at the Iron Bridge, 27 May 2017). Others made the connection between the present and the future, reflecting UNESCO language by talking about the importance of preserving the site "for the future" (Interviews with tourists at Blists Hill, 27 July 2017), or "for future generations" (Interviews with tourists at the Old Furnace, 3 August 2017).

Riegl (1903) notably included 'age-value' as one of the things he considered to be valuable in monuments, using it to refer to the value of things derived from the patina of age rather than the specific connection to a period of time, which he referred to as 'historical value' (Jokilehto, 1999). It was clear through these interviews that it was the age of things in Ironbridge Gorge which made many consider them to be worthy of preservation, with several tourists specifically talking about preserving "old things" (Interviews with tourists at the Iron Bridge and Blists Hill, 27 May 2017 and 27 July 2017).

There was a circular logic apparent in a number of conversations I had with visitors relating to what WHSs are. There is an understanding, which might seem broadly self-evident, that a WHS is an important place. Frequently there is an absence between a sense of the

importance of the site and the reasoning behind this importance. Several visitors told me that it was incredibly important to conserve Ironbridge Gorge, because it *was* a WHS. Or similarly, that they were concerned that too many places were becoming WHSs, because it would make the existing ones less significant; not the designation less significant but the sites themselves (Interviews with tourists at Blists Hill, 9 August 2017). Another visitor simply noted that the reason that Ironbridge Gorge was a WHS was that "they applied to the committee and they agreed" reflecting the idea that the status was the result of external validation rather than inherent value (Interviews with tourists at Blists Hill, 28 July 2017). There was a sense that being a WHS was evidence that the site was important and to an extent, that being World Heritage made it important, independently from the values that are encompassed in the OUV. Through all of this, it is clear that the lack of emphasis on World Heritage status as anything substantively more than a quality mark by the majority of tourism industry stakeholders (see section 5.2.1) has not helped visitors in understanding the nature of World Heritage.

6.2.2 Talking about (Outstanding Universal) Value

Regardless of whether tourists are aware of what World Heritage status means, tourist narratives reveal insights into how visitors are engaging with the aspects of the site identified as possessing OUV. In other words, the ways that visitors understand the different values of the site help us consider how tourists' conceptualisation of value relates to the World Heritage status of the site. As previously shown (Table 3.1), Ironbridge Gorge's SOUV identifies a number of specific features of particular significance. This includes the importance of the Coalbrookdale Old Furnace and the Iron Bridge as well as the wider industrial landscape and the symbolic significance of the area (UNESCO, no date-c). These

inscribed values form an interesting juxtaposition with the perceptions of visitors as to why Ironbridge Gorge is on the List. Among those who had an answer, visitors interviewed at the Iron Bridge almost unanimously thought the Bridge itself was the sole reason for inscription, either saying that the Bridge was important or specifying that it was because it was the 'world's first iron bridge'. This contrasted to a broader range of ideas in other parts of the Gorge, where visitors were more likely to quote the slogan that Ironbridge Gorge is the 'birthplace of the Industrial Revolution', which fits with the symbolic role of Ironbridge Gorge and which also derives primarily from Darby's innovations at the Old Furnace.

The two main responses to the question of what is important about Ironbridge Gorge, or why it is on the List, were either that "it's the birthplace of industry" or that "it's the world's first iron bridge". These responses are not inaccurate in themselves, and indeed, reflect the widespread narratives presented to tourists both before they visit and during it (see section 5.2.3). However, it is interesting to note the way that superlatives have found more ground than the broader societal impacts of the Ironbridge Gorge story. In other words it is the outstanding rather than the universal elements which seem to have the greatest traction. It is worth considering what the impact of using these phrases is. As will be discussed further below (see section 6.3.3) the use of clichéd phrases is often part of a wider range of tourist performances and is embodied in the physical engagement of a person with a place. They allow the visitor to frame their experience verbally, if potentially unreflexively, and join their narratives of the site to those being communicated by individuals and organisations at work in the Gorge. The problem arises if there is no further engagement beyond an initial assertion that the Bridge, for example, is the world's first.

This is what MacCannell (2011, n.p.) has identified as one of the fundamental problems with what he calls “the Touristic Attitude”. He posits that in the act of demonstrating their apparent attraction to something, such as the Iron Bridge, that tourists obscure the banality of their internal reaction, asking “what is it about the attractions, monuments, symbols and sights [of Rome] that tourists refuse to think about?” (MacCannell, 2011, n.p.). As a further example, widespread belief that the Iron Bridge is the work of either Telford or Brunel reveals a lack of engagement with the historical significance of the Bridge as the first of its kind and influential in transforming bridge design the world over. A famous bridge must surely have a famous designer. These convictions about what a famous bridge should comprise were also reflected in the number of tourists I spoke to who commented that they were disappointed by its small size, having assumed it to be much larger (Interviews with tourists at the Iron Bridge and Benthall Edge, 1 July 2017 and 10 August 2017). Other responses on Trip Advisor revealed uncertainty about the source of the Bridge’s importance, quoting that it’s the “first iron bridge” but believing it to be “in Britain” or just, “one of the first iron bridges” (Shawn C, 2017; _shiela_goy, 2017).

The Iron Bridge is widely considered to be the most significant part of Ironbridge Gorge so it is important to consider whether there is anything in this that goes beyond this site. There are certainly some aspects of this which are site specific: the Gorge is now named after the Iron Bridge which is a clear indicator to tourists, if misleadingly, that the Bridge is the single most important feature. It also has a long history of being particularly important for visitors (see section 3.2.1). In World Heritage terms the Bridge is equal to the significance of the Old Furnace, but comparatively the Old Furnace is barely known about; it doesn’t even warrant its own Trip Advisor page. Both the Furnace and the Bridge are physical structures representing much broader significance. The Old Furnace was the location where a world-

changing discovery was made. The Bridge was the first attempt at doing something completely new in engineering and as such, the prototype for single-span bridges all over the world. The Bridge, however, is also important in aesthetic and historic terms. People come to look at it and walk over it not because of its engineering significance, although some do, but simply because it's there and because it is famous. The Old Furnace struggles to compete.

These two monuments provide an insight into the importance of the site's OUV for visitors. It could be said that it shows that the concept of OUV is irrelevant; at a surface level the two monuments should be given equal significance by the people who visit and this is simply not the case. However, there is perhaps an interesting nuance. At the Iron Bridge I have spoken to visitors who appear to have been fully captured by the way the site is communicated; they spoke as if they were reading off the SOUV. For most visitors, however, the Iron Bridge was just something they enjoyed visiting. They enjoy walking over it, they take photographs and they are mildly impressed, leaving again after a relatively short time. In contrast, at the Old Furnace there were a much greater proportion of visitors who seemed to have internalised the story of its significance to a greater extent. The absence of an 'obvious' reason for its significance seems to actually encourage visitors to try and find out why it is important, although this may reflect the fact that the Old Furnace is more likely to attract visitors already invested in engaging with it on a deeper level, having sought it out despite the lack of promotion (see section 6.3.3).

The industrial landscape of the Gorge featured in very few of the interviewed tourists' perceptions of why the area is significant, even when asking the questions away from the monumental spaces of the Gorge. While a small number of visitors commented on broader

aspects of the landscape, such as the ceramic works and the widespread blast furnace sites, it was much more common to hear people talk about it as a rural place. These comments related to the scenic significance of the area, with some, as can be seen in the quotations below, assuming that was why it was inscribed on the World Heritage List:

> (Question: "Do you know why Ironbridge Gorge is on the World Heritage List?")
>
> "Um, it's an area of natural beauty".
>
> "Probably the beauty of the area".
>
> "It's similar to National Trust isn't it? It's beautiful".
>
> (Interviews with tourists at the Iron Bridge, 27 May 2017 and 10 August 2017)

6.2.3 Wider perceptions of value

The interviews with tourists reflected a wide range of things that individuals considered valuable and special about the Gorge. I want to consider here how wider perceptions of value, particularly authenticity, are reflected in the data collected. 'Authenticity' is a concept central to the idea of World Heritage and is a requirement for a site to be inscribed on the List. While there has been an evolution of how authenticity is perceived, it is still very much bound up with the truthfulness of the evidence given for OUV (UNESCO WHC, 2017). However, authenticity as a word has widespread usage outside of World Heritage (see sections 2.2.3 and 2.3.2 for examples from heritage and tourism). In contrast to the UNESCO perception of the phrase, the area of the WHS which was most commonly described to me as authentic was Blists Hill Victorian Town, which is a reconstructed version of a much sanitised and imaginary settlement. In Bruner's (1994, pp399-400) research on a similarly reconstructed heritage tourist attraction, New Salem, he found a range of uses of the term authentic, ranging from having an authentic feel to being authorised by an official body. One

of the issues this raises is whether, for tourists, authenticity can relate to the perception of being real; about credibility rather than necessarily relating to genuineness.

In Ironbridge Gorge authenticity, for tourists, appears to relate much more closely to 'authenticity of experience', something which feels real. Unfortunately for the communication of the area's industrial story, this may be in conflict with what visitors believe to be authentic. One person I spoke to at Blists Hill, told me that they abhorred the beginning part of their visit to Blists Hill, where there is an audio-visual experience focused on the sounds and sights of ironworking. It was, they told me with great censure, "like a nightmare" and they felt that it should be removed from the much more appropriate quiet village scene they experienced in the rest of their visit (Interviews with tourists at Blists Hill, 29 July 2017). In the township of Ironbridge as well, the notion of authenticity can be seen to be bound up, for some, with inaccurate perceptions about what Ironbridge would have been like in the past. One couple told me that they "like the fact that it's still old fashioned - *untouched"* (Interviews with tourists at the Iron Bridge, 1 May 2017, emphasis added), while others referred to the things they thought were special about Ironbridge as it being "time gone by" (Interviews with tourists at Benthall Edge, 17 April 2017), or "olde-worldy" (Interviews with tourists at the Blists Hill, 29 July 2017). This reflects the fact that, for many visitors, the work of heritage conservation and management over the past few decades, which has created what Ironbridge is today, has aligned it more closely with what people perceive as an 'authentic' historical place, but that perception relates to places very different to Ironbridge, revealing a divide between authenticity in terms of fabric and authenticity in terms of perception.

Tourists also value many things which go beyond the narrow constraints of the World Heritage designation. One person told me that “Ironbridge is my happy place - it’s where I go to relax. I came here as a kid so it takes me back" (Interview with tourists in Ironbridge, 2 August 2017). Personal memories, either of Ironbridge Gorge itself, or of things it reminds them of, can be incredibly significant and many visitors I spoke to reflected on previous visits in relation to how they perceived their experiences presently. These visitors have had the opportunity to develop a deeper knowledge of Ironbridge Gorge through repeat visits, but the interviews suggest that this primarily encourages them to attach personal memories to the place.

For others, the ‘quaintness’ of Ironbridge, or the sense they had of some, perhaps ephemeral, ‘historic-ness’ of it as a place, was particularly significant. Visitors said things like there is “so much of the past in front of your eyes” (SKKBmouth, 2017). For some, the historic ‘feel’ of the place allowed them to experience a connection with the past, with one commenting on Trip Adivsor that visiting Ironbridge had been “quite a moving experience, overall. Nostalgic” (443ajh82, 2017). This experience of nostalgia may actually be an important part of how some visitors are able to develop empathy with Ironbridge Gorge as a place. In a recent study using brain imaging to examine how places affect people the National Trust (2017) found that places which evoke a sense of nostalgia are associated with safety and comfort. The familiarity of nostalgic places is already associated with personal emotion allowing a connection to be formed, which can be the foundation for a more meaningful connection with the specific values of a place. One visitor told me that Blists Hill had “reminded me of things my mother and grandmother used to have” (Interview with tourists at Blists Hill, 28 July 2017). The role of the official bodies and individuals is significant

here, as people can only form a connection with what they are presented with. If the storytelling is not in line with the OUV then that opportunity to connect will be lost.

There is evidence that visitors value authenticity, but are more concerned with the appearance of it. Similarly the age of features in the Ironbridge Gorge landscape is important to visitors who associate it with being able to connect to 'the past' but the specific history of Ironbridge Gorge itself is overwhelmed by more generic narratives relating to a Victorian rural ideal. Harrison (2002, p173) writes that travel to a destination is essential to enabling tourists to connect meaningfully with places, saying that it is through travel that places become real, as features on an imagined globe only previously perceived as grey spaces. However, visiting does not necessarily make these spaces on the imagined globe enriched with a particularly deep level of knowledge or connection. On arrival, the pre-tour perceptions of tourists collide with the many stories about the place already being told and there is no one way in which tourists form their own narratives, combining those of the site that they encounter with their own preconceptions and knowledge. However, as discussed in Chapter 5 (section 5.3) the story of Ironbridge Gorge is layered onto the Gorge as a physical landscape and it is in the spaces of this storyscape that tourists encounter and interact with these narratives. It is, therefore, also important to examine the ways in which tourists engage with the site and place that examination alongside this discussion about how they relate their perceptions of the site. The following section explores how variation in tourist performances, driven by the intention of the visitor and the structuring forces of the way the site is managed, provide the context for engagement both at a shallow and deeper level.

6.3 A tourist landscape: performance and place

6.3.1 Thinking about performance

In Ironbridge Gorge tourist intentionality and desire play out in a heavily managed and structured landscape which, as explored in Chapter 5, is overlaid with a multitude of ideas and imaginaries of what it is and how it should be encountered. Through the interplay of tourist performances and the management of the site a range of different kinds of spaces which tourists can encounter are created (see section 5.3). These include spaces where tourists are envisioned as the primary consumers, specifically the museum and monumental spaces, and other areas where people who live and work in the Gorge are much more visible, particularly the natural and shopping spaces. One way of analysing the ways in which these spaces are encountered and experienced by tourists is to use the metaphor of the stage, which can be used to interrogate how tourist performances are informed and guided by the nature of the space in which they are enacted (Edensor, 2000a). This raises the question of what kind of stages are present in the Ironbridge Gorge landscape and how these affect the ways in which tourists choose to perform on them.

In Ironbridge Gorge, the natural spaces are the least tourist-focused of the tourist spaces identified, making them the least likely to be a stage for the tourist performances which characterise enclavic spaces (see section 5.3.2 and 5.3.4). Whilst there are numerous interpretation boards and easily available leaflet walking trails the woodlands are widely used by local people and are often located just beyond the edges of the more tourist-focused areas. This allows visitors to ‘opt in’ to characteristically tourist behaviour such as reading the signage or at least being seen to read it. In contrast, the most enclavic spaces in Ironbridge Gorge are the museum spaces, which by virtue of the entrance fees and enclosed nature of

the majority of the sites are set apart from more the commonplace activities taking place elsewhere. Located in between the less tourist-focused natural spaces and the highly tourist-focused museum spaces are the shopping and monumental ones. Both the shopping space of the Wharfage in Ironbridge and the Iron Bridge, a monumental space, are often very busy with tourists, but are also used by the local community. Other monumental spaces are located within the museums, such as the Blists Hill blast furnaces, or the Old Furnace in Coalbrookdale. These spaces form the stages for tourist performances in Ironbridge Gorge, be it as arenas for storytelling and engagement with the past, viewpoints for the visual-centred practices of gazing and photography, or as a backdrop to the many and varied tourist activities focused around identity and building relationships with travelling companions (see section 2.3.2).

Drawing on observation, interviews with tourists and analysis of tourist-produced texts, four particular categories of performance in Ironbridge Gorge can be identified. These include many of the same performances noted at tourist attractions worldwide, with the categories providing a way of examining different modes of engagement with the WHS as arenas within which the communication of World Heritage values may be taking place. These are relaxation, admiration, enquiry and inscription; categories developed through analysis of the data gathered (see Chapter 4) and drawing on a range of works on tourism which will be discussed below. It should be noted that these categories of performance are not exclusive and many tourists will engage in more than one during their visit. Within these, all the anticipated tourist practices (see section 2.3.2) are located, such as photography, wandering, souvenir shopping and so on, and it is in the interaction of these and the particular spaces of Ironbridge Gorge that meaning and value may be communicated. I have chosen to focus on less enclavic areas of the WHS, rather than the museum spaces where movement is much

more heavily controlled, as they provide the clearest examples of this interplay between tourist intention and the staging of the site.

6.3.2 Relaxation

Tourism is closely bound up with ideas about holidays and recreation as something which should leave you rejuvenated and able to re-enter the world of work and everyday life on return (Krippendorf, 1987). Whilst Ironbridge Gorge is often only a day trip destination for many of its visitors, the importance of relaxation and rest is very much at the heart of the way many visitors interact with it. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 5 the transformation of Ironbridge Gorge from a place of production and industry into a landscape focused on leisure has a long history. This transformation has been incredibly successful and typical tourist performances of walking, shopping and leisurely eating and drinking predominate across the tourist spaces in the Gorge.

This is particularly apparent in the area around the Iron Bridge, where the monumental space of the Bridge meets the shopping space of the Wharfage. Here a common refrain in conversations with tourists was that they had "*just* come for a general mooch around really", or that "we *just* wanted somewhere to come out" (interviews with tourists at the Iron Bridge, 1 May 2017 and 17 June 2017, emphasis added). A feature of these comments is the frequent diminishing of the significance of the trip; it is "just" an afternoon out for a leisurely walk, perhaps a coffee at one of the cafes and a browse in the shops. However, it is notable that they chose Ironbridge Gorge as the destination for this kind of day out, clearly perceiving it to be an appropriate type of place for such activities. It is imagined as a leisurely place; a stage for performing leisure.

In their work on the relationships between places and tourists' identity, McCabe and Stokoe (2004) reflected on how the ways that tourists categorise themselves affects the way in which they use place in the construction of self-identity. Their work focused on visitors to an English National Park, but they identified a similar trend in the categorisation between 'pootlers' and more serious walkers/hikers. The 'pootlers' were *just* out for the day, carrying out routine performances rather than those particularly focused on the destination of the park itself (McCabe and Stokoe, 2004). In Ironbridge Gorge it was common for relaxation focused visitors to comment on the availability of pleasant places to eat and drink in their choice of Ironbridge Gorge as a destination for a day trip. This was particularly the case on sunny days when numerous interviews with tourists revealed the same stories, that "we came out to catch a bit of sun", "we just came for a quick drink, soak up the ambience", and "we've just eaten for an hour and had a drink, we don't know anything about the area really" (Interviews with tourists at the Iron Bridge, 17 June 2017).

Particularly focused on the Wharfage (shopping space), Iron Bridge (monumental), and Benthall Edge woods (natural), there is a pattern of fairly mundane leisure activities which are played out within the World Heritage landscape of the Gorge, occurring within the same spaces as other tourists are engaging with the heritage aspects, but having no significant connection with them. On the Wharfage tourists are encouraged to walk along the footpaths, gaze into the windows of the shops, buy coffee and perhaps a souvenir. One of the central phrases that visitors use when referring to walking along the narrow strip of tourist space that runs along the northern bank of the River Severn is that they have been for a walk 'along' the Wharfage, or 'along' the river, which is analogous. The manner of walking along the Wharfage is often slow, with frequent stops to look into shop windows, or go further and enter the shops beyond. Amato (2004, p86) describes window-shopping as a form of "stop-

and-go" promenading, a leisurely activity which also demonstrates and reinforces an individual's identity as a person of taste with time and money to spare. While window-shopping is a 'touristy' kind of walk, certainly a leisure activity rather than one of work, there is little in this which is particular to Ironbridge Gorge, or heritage more generally. Here, too, there are barriers to the communication of World Heritage value.

As explored in Chapter 5, there are numerous ways in which the products available to buy in the shops, as well as the way in which the shops brand themselves, refer to aspects of the site's OUV. However, as also shown in Chapter 5 (see section 5.3.3) this overwhelmingly focuses on the Iron Bridge, with other messages made in considerably subtler ways. While walking along the Wharfage it is impossible not to be aware of the Bridge, so this is already a central element of the experience of walking in this area. Iron Bridge focused souvenirs may feed into the construction of post-trip narratives of the visit but they do not substantially add to the communication of value in the act of wandering along the Wharfage whilst engaging in some casual shopping.

This form of leisurely walking is not the only type observed in Ironbridge Gorge. Kay and Moxham (1996, p175) have identified numerous different ways of recreational walking, ranging from intensive pursuits which focus on the action of walking itself such as rambling, hill-walking and hiking, to those which focus more on engagement with particular spaces - the stroll, wander, saunter and amble. It is these more leisurely walking styles which predominate in Ironbridge Gorge, particularly those which imply a leisurely practice where the walk itself is the focus of the experience, rather than necessarily the destination. I carried out observation and interviews with tourists in Benthall Edge, an area of woodland located on the southern banks of the River Severn which has walking trails beginning from the end

of the Iron Bridge (see section 4.8). While characterised by mature woodland, for which the presence of rare species has led to it being designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SGCT, no date-d), it is a part of the WHS where the industrial history of the area can still be easily observed. The main footpath runs along the former railway line and keen eyes will identify cuttings and a viaduct along the route. The entrances to coal mines are dotted through the area and there are large areas of former quarries. Other features, including a lime kiln and inclined planes, are also in evidence (SGCT, no date). The area is popular with both serious and more leisurely walkers, although when muddy the less prepared often return quickly (Interviews with tourists in Benthall Edge, 6 August 2017).

Interviews with tourist walkers showed that there was reasonable awareness of the historic features of the woodland, but this seemed to have little effect on how they perceived it. While people would say "oh yes, we saw a sign for that" when referring to the lime kiln, for example, they had rarely gone to see it or find out more, with the reason given that "we were *only* out for a walk" (Interviews with tourists in Benthall Edge, 17 April 2017, 12 August 2017, emphasis added). Perceptions of rurality and industry were further skewed when walkers started from Benthall Hall, a historic country house under the management of the National Trust, located at the top of the Gorge. One visitor told me that "from Benthall Hall you just look out over the fields, there's no sense of it as an industrial place. I had no idea - it's really interesting!" (Interviews with tourists in Benthall Edge, 6 August 2017).

Walking is something situated within a broader realm of social practices that reflect cultural ideas about space and place, particularly rural walking where romantic ideals have long been responsible for the creation both of physical walking routes and the ideas about the appropriate ways to walk them (Edensor, 2000b). Many of the interviews with walkers

revealed that they perceived the woodlands predominantly as a natural space, emphasising the significance of the rare flora, or commenting on their appreciation of being able to get into the country. As a place associated, therefore, with ruralised ways of walking the idea of Ironbridge Gorge as a rural place is reinforced. As explored in Chapter 5 this is not inaccurate, but it does feed in to the construction of a rural imaginary for Ironbridge Gorge where the industrial story of the Gorge is sidelined in favour of the aesthetic appreciation of nature.

In this context the communication of Ironbridge Gorge's World Heritage values is difficult, even when the woodlands are so full of industrial features, many of which have well placed and engaging static interpretation available. Further, in both Benthall Edge and the Wharfage many of the things that these visitors comment on are, as discussed in Chapter 5 (see section 5.3.4), a direct consequence of the processes of heritage conservation and management that have taken place in the Gorge over the last 50 years. If the industrial heritage of Ironbridge Gorge had not been recognised as worthy of conservation and protection, the atmosphere of the Wharfage and the surrounding area would be much changed. However, the effects of this conservation work has been to make Ironbridge Gorge a relaxing place, a place where visitors can say "it's just idyllic" and comment that it is "such a nice place to wander around" (Interviews with tourists at the Iron Bridge, 1 May 2017 and 17 June 2017). If this is a visitor's only interaction with Ironbridge Gorge it is difficult to see that any communication of the industrial story of Ironbridge Gorge, and resultantly its World Heritage value, is transferred.

6.3.3 Admiration

While simply wandering along the Wharfage path, or relaxing with an ice cream may not, by itself, lead to the communication of value, many visitors expressed considerable admiration when I spoke to them about Ironbridge Gorge. The category of 'admiration' is drawn from the analysis of interviews, fieldnotes and Trip Advisor reviews, which indicate that the language and performances of tourists often indicates that they are engaging with the site through admiring features within it. This was particularly apparent in relation to the Iron Bridge and the Old Furnace, but also reflected attitudes to the wider landscape of the Gorge, the river, the woodlands and the 'quaint' areas of the town. One of the ways in which this was expressed was with clichéd superlatives. As explored by Sterling (2017) clichés are very common in tourism, both in the ways in which sites are marketed, but also in the unprompted responses by tourists themselves, and these rather than limiting experience, work within wider systems of place myth creation. Visitors would comment, in relation to the Iron Bridge, that "it's just so wonderful to look at", or "it's a real work of engineering", a "fantastic piece of architecture" (Interviews with tourists at the Iron Bridge, 1 May 2017 and 17 June 2017). In many ways these responses are not surprising, they allow tourists to vocalise an experience of affect, where it might otherwise be difficult to describe what is ultimately an emotional response, whether they are moved by aesthetics, awareness of heritage value or other more ephemeral reasons.

However, as Robinson (2012b) has identified, these expressions of admiration can reflect a learned and practiced emotional response. This is not purely about narration of experience, but a way of qualifying what that experience is, often in a social context. As a result, it is difficult to determine whether, for a particular individual, a verbal expression of admiration

alone represents a significant interaction with the place, or whether it is an unreflexive performance based on knowledge of expected behaviour. I recorded an example of this uncertainty in my fieldnotes:

> People who seem familiar with the Iron Bridge (group of older people overheard saying "we'll walk under it and then round") can still be brought to a quiet standstill when they first see it. It has a wow factor. I watched the group come to a halt when they got to the Bridge. One said "Such a feat of engineering. What's the date on it? 1782?" "1779" another replied. "Let's take a picture". (Fieldnotes, 27 May 2017).

My initial perception was that the group had visited before, based on their apparent knowledge of how to approach it. However, they still acted as if very impressed by the structure, asking questions and taking photographs. With this group, as with many others who I interviewed, the words and actions used in relation to the Iron Bridge appear to reflect an experience of affect, but it is possible that they are simply following a 'script' of how to act at places of this kind.

Another tourist performance, which might indicate an experience of admiration is sight-seeing and gazing, something long identified as a central tourist performance and closely related to the similarly visual practice of photography (Edensor, 1998; MacCannell, 2011; Urry and Larsen, 2011). Sight-seeing is an archetypal performance in tourism and one which forms part of the 'tourist gaze', which as described by Urry and Larsen (2011, p2), is the structural framework within which we experience places during travel. Ironbridge Gorge is no different, with the acts of looking being a vital component of engaging with the Gorge for many visitors. The travel writer Bill Bryson (2015, p252) describes a visit to Ironbridge in *The Road to Little Dribbling: More Notes From a Small Island,* eloquently summarising what many visitors to the Iron Bridge in particular seem to feel:

> I went to Ironbridge, a village in Shropshire so proud of its most prominent structure that it named itself after it. And it is a very fine structure, it must be said. It was the first iron bridge in the world - the first substantial iron anything… [the] bridge is one of the great structures of the age. It is at once elegant and decorous, yet wholly utilitarian. Every bit of it has a purpose and yet it is endlessly agreeable to look at, too. Indeed, as I learned now, you simply can't take your eyes off it. It is nearly impossible, I think, to resist the urge to walk over it and around it and to view it from as many angles as you can contrive. It is, in short, gloriously, uniquely arresting.

Bryson notes that he feels compelled to view the Bridge from every angle, connecting the tourist performances of walking over and around the Bridge to the desire to gaze at it. Unsurprisingly, gazing is particularly prevalent around the Iron Bridge, which has been a focus for the aesthetic gaze since its construction (see section 3.2.1). As discussed below (see section 6.4.2), gazing and photographic practices by tourists at the Iron Bridge principally relate to the consumption of three particular views: views of the Iron Bridge, views on the Iron Bridge and views from the Iron Bridge (Figure 6.7 below). However, views of the River Severn, the wooded valley, the streetscape of Ironbridge itself and even the twentieth century cooling towers of Ironbridge Power Station, are also often the subject for the tourist gaze (see section 6.4.1).

There is a common sense association between the fact that tourists spend time gazing at something and the interpretation that this indicates an affective experience. However, it could also be argued that the performance of sight-seeing is one that pulls the tourist physically and metaphorically away from the object of observation. At the Iron Bridge this is especially apparent, as it is not possible to see the Bridge effectively while standing on it; one has to walk away from it in order to look back at it. This pulls tourists away from the object of their gaze, something that creates distance rather than intimacy. This is emphasised, both at the Iron Bridge and at the Old Furnace, where the arrangement of public space encourages visitors to linger and look in some areas more than in others. This creates

particular spaces where visitors are tacitly encouraged to perform acts of gazing, something identified by Urry and Larsen (2011) as an important part of how the visual consumption of tourist places is enabled. This includes areas with benches, which I always referred to in my fieldnotes as ‘viewing platforms’ and particular types of planting which fit within aesthetic tropes, such as a cherry blossom tree and a wildflower meadow.

This allows the creation of images such as Figure 6.3, in which the Bridge appears within the naturalised framing of the spring flowers. Both the tree and the wildflower meadow on the other side successfully encourage visitors to view and photograph the Iron Bridge with these ‘natural’ features in the foreground and both views also form a diagonal sightline towards the southern, heavily wooded, banks of the Gorge, something which will be discussed in more detail in section 6.4. Framing a photograph is both a functional procedure and one which metaphorically contributes to how a visitor connects with certain parts of the landscape and disconnects from others (Robinson and Picard, 2009). This raises the question of whether a tourist photograph of the Iron Bridge, where the image is foregrounded by cherry blossom or wildflowers, reflects a deeper connection with the flora rather than the structure. Further, in the same way as tourists use clichéd phrases following the expected performances of sightseeing, the framing of a photograph is a form of editing through which the tourist enacts known photographic conventions (Robinson and Picard, 2009). Once again, the performances which might appear on the surface to relate to admiration of the historic features of the Ironbridge Gorge, and by consequence a connection with the World Heritage values, may not imply a particularly deep engagement at all.

Figure 6.3: The Iron Bridge framed by cherry blossom (photograph: Acheson, 8 March 2017)

At the Iron Bridge one of the primary activities is walking *over* or *under* it, sharing its primacy with photography as the most common tourist performance here. This is not to say that other forms of walking, such as walking around, are not also practiced, but it is clear that these direct, physical, walking encounters with the Bridge are the most significant in how visitors structure their visit. I spent time simply observing what people do on the Bridge, and the thing that stood out the most is that people would walk over it and then turn around and walk back. So universal was this that, when I moved into a stage of interviewing people, I actually found the best place to intercept tourists was at the end of the Bridge as they had reached it and were just in the process of turning around to go back; it was the action which most clearly identified them as tourists. I spoke to visitors who were quite aware of the strangeness of this and referred to it jokingly, with one saying "well we need to walk slowly, to savour it you know!" (Interview with tourists on the Iron Bridge, 1 May 2017). Another time I spoke to a family, where one of the adults mentioned to a child in the group that "there's nothing

on the other side mate, that's it, we've done it!" (Interview with tourists on the Iron Bridge, 27 May 2017). The phrase "we've done it" indicated to me that, for this group at least, crossing the Bridge was the ultimate act of visiting it, an essential component which meant that the visit to the Bridge was complete.

The accessibility of areas to walk in or over structures tourists' experiences of those places. Walking under the Bridge along the northern bank of the river is an integral part of the visit for many people. However, it is not possible to easily access the southern bank of the river and getting directly under the Bridge in the same manner is only possible if one is prepared to climb over a fence. The layout of the public space constrains the possible ways in which the Bridge can be viewed. At the Old Furnace visitors spend most of their time walking around the structure. The paths encourage the visitor to walk down one side of the Old Furnace site, enter the cover building, walk around it once more but in closer confines, and then leave to circle it a final time. In each slowly spiraling circle the visitor is provided with detailed information about the structure and the industrial processes associated with it, transferred through static interpretation panels and a walking guide. When I interviewed people comments like this were common:

> "We just generally walked around - had a glimpse of the signs".
>
> "It's great to see these places in real life, you get an impression of what it was like for people in the past. And it's so well preserved - it's an absolute pleasure to walk around it all".
>
> (Interviews with visitors to the Old Furnace, 5 August 2017)

The slow meandering of visitors around the Old Furnace seems to often be associated with a lack of deeper engagement. While this is a seemingly contradictory occurrence, I believe, it derives from the way that tourists are habitually following the well-known steps of visiting a heritage site. Much like visiting an art gallery or a museum they wander around the

structure, following the paths laid out for them even though there is little to prevent alternative route-making (Figure 6.4). I observed that the majority of visitors looked at the interpretation signs, but when I interviewed them as they were leaving many told me they didn't actually read them. Looking at the signs and the structure is the appropriate behaviour at the Old Furnace, the layout of the site making this clear even when there are no other visitors present to enforce compliance. When I asked people what they thought of it, a common response was that they had *just* come for a look around. As seen above, this 'relaxed' category of tourist performances does not encourage the communication of value.

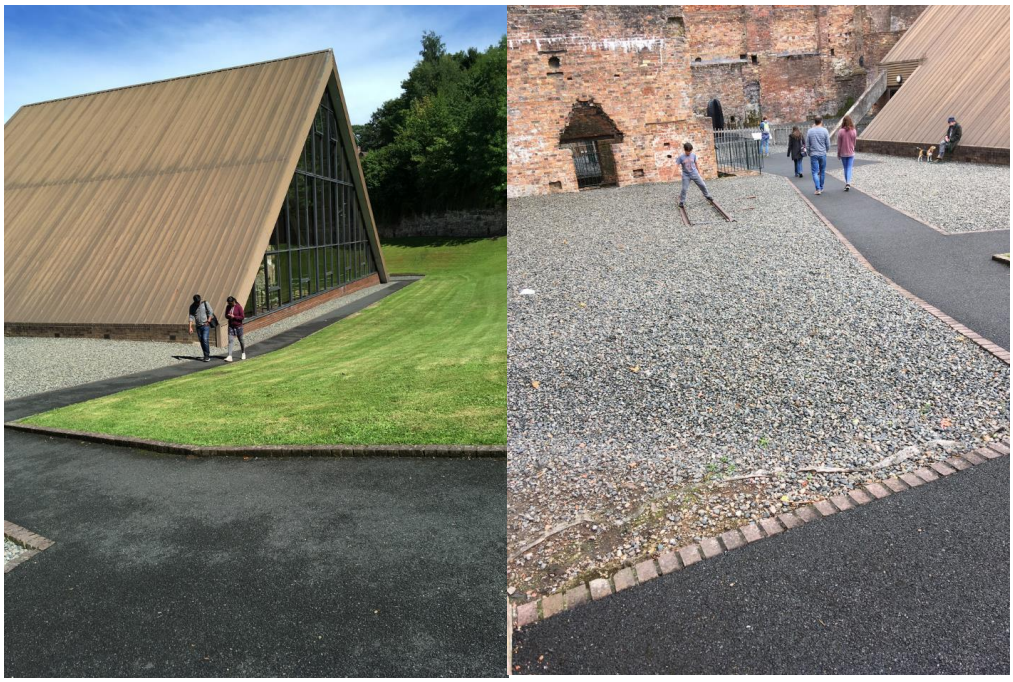

Figure 6.4: Tourists at the Old Furnace (photographs: Acheson, 5 August 2017)

However, some visitors certainly did engage with the Old Furnace in a deeper way. What is intriguing is that this was often either resulting from having taken a guided tour, when the presence of a knowledgeable storyteller bridged the gap between the visitor and the monument, but also through visitors moving beyond just walking around the structure. It is possible to get closer to the Old Furnace, either by walking across the tunnel through its

centre, or climbing the steps up to the top of it to look down into the depths. Those visitors who had a positive response to my question of "what did you like about the Furnace?" often replied that being able to get up to the top was their favourite part, with some commenting that it was bigger/or smaller than they had expected inside, or that you can't understand it without being able to do that (Interviews with tourists at the Old Furnace, 3 August 2017, 5 August 2017 and 16 August 2017). While not exactly analogous to crossing the Iron Bridge, climbing to the top of the charging ramp of a blast furnace and looking down into the crucible, is about as close as you can get at such a structure. It is intriguing that it is this people enjoyed the most, and which seems to be more closely associated with communication of the actual usage of the structure. Garrett's (2015, p77) work on urban exploration includes the reflection from one of the explorers that playful interaction with an industrial ruin, Battersea Power Station, made it feel "like this is our ruin". The more physical and embodied, even playful, interactions between visitor and place allows the possibility for greater intimacy to be formed, allowing greater potential for the communication of values, something which is made possible by the relative robustness of industrial structures.

It is possible to wonder what situations encourage or discourage meaningful encounters with World Heritage values. Discussions with tourists about what they enjoyed most about their visits revealed an interesting trend. For many, the element of tourist performance that seems to inspire the most meaningful connection was the opportunity to gain intimacy with the thing they admire. Visitors commented on how important it was for them to "be able to get up close to the original thing"; that "seeing it is so different to just reading about it" (Interviews at the Iron Bridge, 10 August 2017 and the Old Furnace, 1 August 2017). Others, particularly at the Old Furnace, where it is often possible to be completely alone with the

physical fabric of the monument within the enclosed space of the cover building, commented that they were moved by the experience of "just standing in there… a place that changed the world", "a space to reflect" (Interviews with tourists at the Old Furnace, 7 July 2017 and 5 August 2017).

These reflections on intimacy were, however, relatively rare, with far more tourists recounting simply being impressed by the size, or the history, of particular parts of the Ironbridge Gorge landscape. Others were even distinctly unimpressed, saying that they had assumed there would be more to see, or that the Bridge, for example, would be larger (Interview with tourists at the Iron Bridge, 10 August 2017). Here it is worth reflecting on Willim's (2006) work on 'industrial cool', where he posits that modern encounters with industrial heritage are shaped by an aesthetic of the 'coolness' of historic industrial remains, a coolness that requires us to have some distance from that which we are observing. Thus, it is in the performances which most appear to characterise admiration that there may be a distance created between the visitor and the place. It is important here that, for many, admiration of the historical aspects of the Gorge, the monuments that justify its inscription on the List, is predominantly visual, with a distance retained between the observer and the subject.

6.3.4 Enquiry

Engagement between visitors and the site is not purely in the realm of abstract aestheticised observation; it can be noted that many visitors include performances relating to enquiry as an important part of their practice on site. By this, I mean those performances motivated by the desire to find out more about the place they are in, to discover new information, or delve deeper into a topic already understood. For some visitors this is the central motivation for

their visit, with one visitor telling me that they had visited numerous sites of its kind and they were trying to see as many as possible (Interview with tourists in Blists Hill exhibition, 18 July 2017). Others expressed a long-held desire to visit and find out about the place, sparked by seeing something about Ironbridge Gorge on television, or hearing about it at school (Interviews with tourists at the Iron Bridge and the Old Furnace, 5 August 2017 and 12 August 2017). This is not to say that all of those motivated by enquiry follow the same approach. I spoke to two people who told me that "we like to come with an open mind - look around first, then find out more later" (Interview with tourists at the Iron Bridge, 10 August 2017). They had been inspecting the welding on the Iron Bridge and had been trying to discover if it had been done later than the original construction. Others had a more informal approach, telling me that they had been trying to work out what all the bits [of the Old Furnace] were, but did not have any intention to seek out clarification afterwards; for them it was part of the fun of the visit (Interview with tourists at the Old Furnace, 1 August 2017). This approach is often associated with delight when there is an opportunity to 'see more', such as being able to climb up to the top of the Old Furnace and look in, or being able to walk under the Iron Bridge. Other visitors were keen to find out more about the history of Ironbridge Gorge, but were focused on more leisurely performances on site and were collecting guidebooks, or taking photographs of signs so that they could read about it upon their return home (Interview with tourists at the Iron Bridge, 1 July 2017).

There is a difference between those visitors who are mildly interested and those who practiced their enquiry with much greater intensity. Stebbins (1996) has discussed how cultural tourism, of which heritage tourism is an element, can be, when undertaken with a particular mindset and approach, a form of 'serious leisure'. Those undertaking 'serious' heritage tourism might, thus, be expected to rely on their travels to substantially contribute

to their self-identity and will invest considerable effort into the trips they make. I certainly met a few visitors to Ironbridge Gorge who might fit comfortably within this definition. One elderly man related to me that the Museum of the Gorge had a sign saying that a visit should take around 45 minutes, but he could not understand it, because he had spent over two hours in there and could have spent more (Interview with tourists on the Iron Bridge, 1 July 2017). The woman he was travelling with seemed far less interested personally, commenting indulgently that "he always likes to read everything". For her, as with most visitors, while they may take leisure seriously, in terms of the significance they give to it, the thing they are pursuing is not an in depth knowledge of the site they are visiting, but rather a more general enjoyment of it.

People spoke to me of wanting to "soak up" or "absorb" Ironbridge Gorge; to engage with it sensuously through *being* in it, rather than through a more active pursuit of it. While statistical analysis of the demographics of visitors was not something I pursued as a result of the research questions I chose, there were evident trends in both gender and age apparent in visitors who I considered to be taking a 'serious leisure' approach. Interviews with IGMT staff and the Discover Telford team indicated that they saw clear segmentation between younger families seeking a fun, if educational day out and older visitors who were more likely to be looking for greater interpretation. Male visitors were also more commonly found to be expressing the preferences as described above. However, these are only trends and there were clear examples of individuals who differed from this, such as one couple I spoke to about the interpretation on the Iron Bridge. The man dismissively said "well it's just a bridge", while the woman said "I like to know who built it and the year, that's what you want to know when you get home - I've taken a photo on my phone so I can remember" (Interview with tourists on the Iron Bridge, 24 June 2017). Thus, while enquiring tourists

are a ready audience for the communication of World Heritage value it must be remembered that those pursuing information with the degree of seriousness discussed above are only a fraction of the number of visitors who come to Ironbridge Gorge.

6.3.5 Inscription

The final group of performances I observed in Ironbridge Gorge were those associated with inscription; the activities of individuals or groups which leave some sort of trace on the site. This is often something associated with the more intangible and yet highly significant processes of memory and identity formation which are so often associated with tourism and heritage (see section 2.2.4). These practices are generally playful, although some border the transgressive or secretive. Figure 6.5 and Figure 6.6 show evidence of a number of these performances taking place around the Iron Bridge, each of which will be discussed in relation to how they contribute to expressions of individual and collective identity. The first group of images (Figure 6.5) show objects which are left behind: love-locks, painted stones and Geocaches. The second group of images (Figure 6.6) shows areas of graffiti around the Iron Bridge. These practices are found across Ironbridge Gorge, but the Iron Bridge is a particular focus, with other Geocaches and graffiti being less focused on a specific place.

Figure 6.5: Items deposited around the Iron Bridge (photographs: Acheson, top left: painted stones, 19 August 2017; bottom left: geocache, 31 March 2017; right: love-locks, 12 August 2017)

Figure 6.5 shows a painted stone and a Geocache both found either on or in the vicinity of the Bridge. These objects reflect games, frequently played by family groups, located in what otherwise appears to be a more formal place. They reflect not only the building of the relationships between members of a group, but also involve a visceral engagement with the physical place. Leaving and retrieving the items is slightly subversive, one needs to be out of the controlling gaze of other visitors or the staff in the Tollhouse with one of the rules of geocaching being that the activity is hidden from non-players (Geocaching, no date). Similarly, graffiti is clearly not an encouraged activity, with most of it being found on the under-side of the Iron Bridge itself, where one can be hidden from view while scratching something into the metalwork. Graffiti is restricted to a few areas around the Iron Bridge and none was found at all at the Old Furnace, the only other monumental space where physical access is possible. At the Iron Bridge there is incised graffiti on the iron structure

next to the path which crosses under it. There is also a softer panel on the viewing platform which has been tagged with a large body of names over time. On the Bridge itself there is light scratching on some of the stone pillars. More ephemeral traces are occasionally left in chalk, the example shown below added by a family group (Figure 6.6). All of these practices involve the symbolic and sometimes physical inscription of a person's identity onto a particular place. It is, as much as a selfie posted on a social media platform, a way of announcing one's presence. However, unlike the selfie, the audience is less clear, highlighting the significance of these actions in cementing memories into places.

Figure 6.6: Graffiti around the Iron Bridge (photographs: Acheson, top left: 12 August 2017; bottom left: 29 October 2016; right: 8 August 2017)

An emergent trend in deepening relational bonds, which specifically relates to bridges, is the leaving of love-locks. This is a custom where people lock padlocks, typically inscribed with names or initials, to structures such as bridges and throw the key away, often into the water if attaching the lock to a bridge. Houlbrook (2017) has discussed the origins of this custom and analysed locks attached to a bridge in Manchester to provide insights into the practice

as a form of ritual deposition. Traditionally the practice reflects a romantic gesture but Houlbrook's (2017) work has identified other trends, including memorialisation and celebration. Of the three love-locks deposited during my fieldwork only one was attached to the Iron Bridge itself, with the other two found on the railing of the viewing platform on the north-east side of the Bridge (Figure 6.5). This is likely to reflect a combination of the difficulty of actually attaching a lock to the thick railings on the Iron Bridge itself and the fact that the viewing platform, with its view of the Bridge, may have made it more symbolically significant for the people who left the locks. All three love-locks were professionally engraved, indicating that the depositors had planned leaving the lock in advance. That the locks were most likely left by tourists is indicated by the choice of the Iron Bridge at all. Houlbrook's (2017) work has indicated that love-locks are an accumulative practice, with the presence of locks encouraging others to be left in a particular place. The Museum staff told me that any locks are removed as soon as they are noticed so it is likely that people living locally would not choose the Iron Bridge. Visitors, however, cannot be blamed for assuming that the Bridge, due to its fame, would be a popular spot for locks to accumulate and the prior engraving of the locks indicates it was a planned event.

While these inscriptive practices do not indicate any particular connection being made between tourists and the OUVs of Ironbridge Gorge it is notable that these activities are concentrated specifically around the Iron Bridge. As a monumental space and the iconic focus of a visit to the Gorge, yet also outside of the more enclavic spaces within the museums, the evidence of these activities reflect the significance of the Iron Bridge in tourist experiences of the WHS.

6.4 Photography

6.4.1 Tourist-produced photographs

Photography is, alongside walking, the most common tourist performance in Ironbridge Gorge. This ranges from the quick snapshot taken on a phone camera, to the more intense preparation required by visitors with more substantial camera equipment. In this chapter there have been a number of issues raised relating to the ways in which the World Heritage values are encountered and engaged with by tourists visiting the Gorge. In particular there is evidence of a divide between how the site is perceived. In World Heritage terms Ironbridge Gorge is a significant place in the history of global industrialisation, with a number of structures which act as a witness to the innovations of the eighteenth century. However, for many tourists it is a quaint and rural place perceived as being of regional or national importance. Through analysis of images shared on the social media platform Instagram (see section 4.8.5) this section explores the ways in which these trends can be seen in the creation and sharing of tourists' photographs and whether this reveals anything else about the communication of World Heritage values.

Instagram is one of the most public social media platforms for sharing photographs, particularly in contrast to Facebook which is much more private. Whilst on Facebook it is not unusual for people to post entire albums of images, on Instagram the selection is much more carefully crafted (Miller and Sinanan 2017). This makes Instagrammed images an interesting counterpart to the similarly carefully selected images used by marketers and heritage interpreters to convey something about the Iron Bridge, or Ironbridge Gorge (see section 5.2.3). Pietrobruno (2014) has highlighted the significance of YouTube videos as an

archive of intangible cultural heritage. Similarly, Instagram functions as an important archive of tourist photography.

Upon examination of images posted with the hashtag #IronbridgeGorge between September 2016 and August 2017 (see section 4.8.5) just under half of them (47%) featured the Iron Bridge, with no other single feature of the area having equivalent numbers of images. In contrast to the Iron Bridge, the Old Furnace in Coalbrookdale, the other major monument of the WHS, is in less than 1% of the photographs. Categorising the images by the different types of tourist space discussed in this chapter and Chapter 5 allowed further reflection on tourist-produced imagery beyond the Iron Bridge (Figure 6.7). Monumental spaces obviously dominate, as they include the Bridge, but images of the streets and buildings of Ironbridge itself (the shopping space) make up a substantial 20% of the images, with museums and natural spaces occupying roughly equal quantities of the remainder.

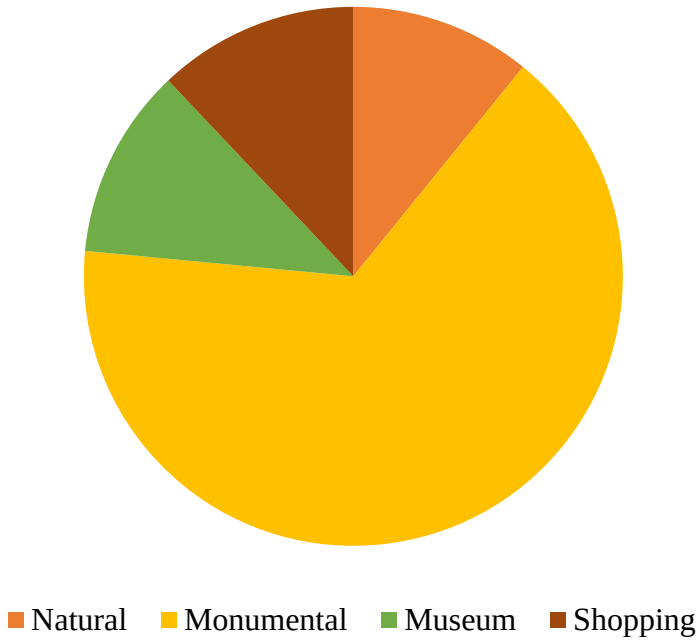

Figure 6.7: Subjects of posts divided by type of space

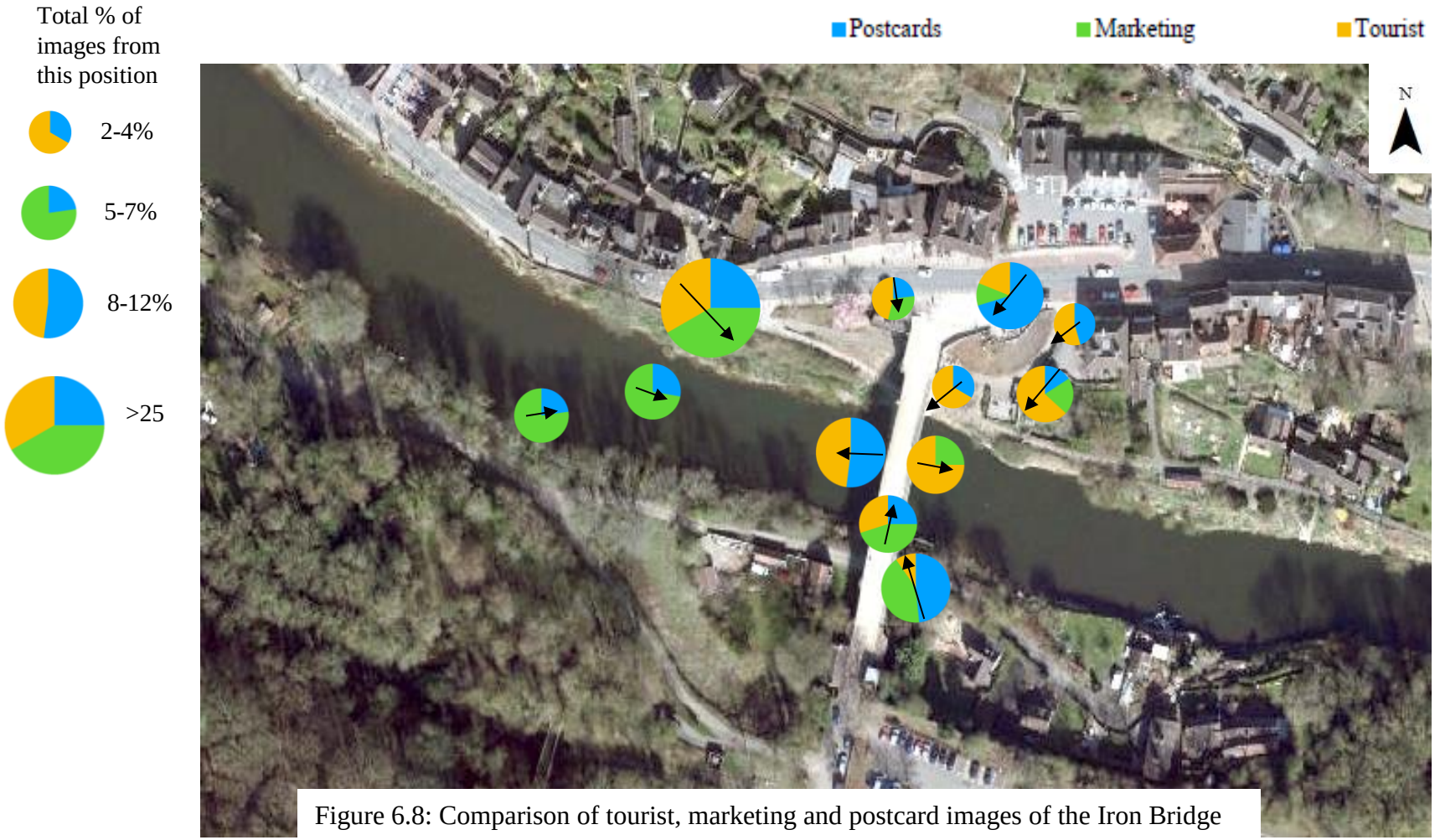

Figure 6.8: Comparison of tourist, marketing and postcard images of the Iron Bridge

Aerial photo © Getmapping Plc

6.4.2 The Iron Bridge

Given the high percentage of images of the Iron Bridge I have taken this as the focus for a more in-depth examination of how tourists have used the image of the Bridge in visual storytelling about their trip. To do this I looked at what the specific subject was in images of the Iron Bridge. I wanted to see if there was a 'classic' image of the Bridge favoured by visitors and use that to contrast the use of the images in marketing materials and postcards. It has long been a fairly accepted idea that tourists reproduce the images presented to them in postcards and guidebooks (e.g. Albers and James, 1988) but this doesn't leave much room for the tourist's own agency, or to consider them as an active co-producer in the tourist experience of place (Bærenholdt et al, 2004, Stylianou-Lambert, 2012). There were a number of interesting differences and similarities which could be observed.

'Official' images of the Iron Bridge, such as those used in tourist information websites, on leaflets and so forth, often use images taken from the south side of the river, or from the river itself. Figure 6.8 shows the comparative proportions of the tourist images compared to postcards and marketing images. This shows a pronounced difference between the tourist-produced images and the official ones, with only 3% of tourist images being taken from the south bank and the river compared to 25% of postcards and 43% of the marketing images. Artistically this makes a lot of sense; the lower riverbank level on the southern side allows the reflection of the Bridge as a circle to be seen and captured in the image. This is not an image that is easy for the tourist to take, however, as the majority are taken from fishing platforms which are located on private property and none of the tourist images are from these areas. Even images taken from the accessible side of the southern bank are rare, occupying only 3% of the tourist-produced images in the Instagram dataset. This is not surprising as,

despite the fact that it is not difficult to get down under the arches of the Bridge, the route is not signed nor is it obvious. Figure 6.9 shows the view of Ironbridge from a publicly accessible part of the southern river bank (right), but also the route down, shown on the left hand side, an uninviting, and unsigned, set of brick steps located on the other side of the tollgate which forms a symbolic boundary of what is the Iron Bridge and what is not.

Figure 6.9: Left: area at the end of the Iron Bridge and the steps down to the southern riverbank; right: view from the southern riverbank (photographs: Acheson, 11 November 2017)

In contrast to the 'official' images the tourist-produced photographs on Instagram are almost entirely either taken on the Bridge itself, or of the Bridge from positions on the northern bank of the river. There were two views shown in far greater numbers than any others of the Iron Bridge. These are images taken of the Bridge from the Wharfage path (Figure 6.10) and images of the river taken from the Bridge (Figure 6.11), the two groups of images both occupying 24% of the dataset, with almost equal numbers of the images of the river taken of each direction. The predominance of images taken from the Wharfage path is intriguing; there are substantially more from the path than from the two more formalised 'viewing

platform areas' where similar views of the Bridge can be had (Figure 6.8). This view is also popular in the official images but as other images common in the postcards and marketing materials are not replicated in the Instagram dataset it is unlikely that this comes from tourists attempting to recreate the images they have seen elsewhere. A possible reason why this image is so popular among tourists is that many of them arrive at the Iron Bridge by walking along the Wharfage from the car parks at Dale End and the Museum of the Gorge, making this view their first of the Bridge. My observations indicate that tourists will walk all around the Iron Bridge and photograph it from many directions, something supported by the presence of images from multiple angles albeit in smaller numbers in the dataset (Figure 6.8). However, the dominance of what may well be their first view of the Iron Bridge suggests that this view has the most significance for visitors.

Figure 6.10: The most popular view of the Iron Bridge, taken looking east along the Wharfage path (natavfc, 2017, reproduced with permission)

The parallel popularity of views of the river taken from the Iron Bridge are equally interesting (Figure 6.11). These images often give no indication that they are taken from a bridge at all with less than half of them including any part of the ironwork. Instead they show an attractive, if rather generic view of a forested river valley with a small settlement on one of the banks. These images are almost completely absent in the marketing materials, which is not surprising as they do not show anything clearly identifiable as Ironbridge Gorge. While there are a similar percentage of postcards which include the view looking west towards Ironbridge itself the alternative view in the other direction is equally popular in the tourist imagery. For visitors, these images convey what they saw while on the Bridge, a representation of their experience rather than a formal portrayal of the place visited. What is interesting in all of these images, those observed being taken and those seen on Instagram, is that the Iron Bridge does not need to be clearly shown to make it a significant place to take a photograph. Visitors know where they took the image and are not necessarily interested in conveying that information. Instead there is an emphasis on sharing the experience of being on the Bridge, or at the location, rather than necessarily communicating knowledge about it (cf Munar and Jacobsen, 2014).

Figure 6.11: Top left: tourists on the Iron Bridge; top right and bottom: views of the River Severn in both directions (photographs: Acheson, 3 November)

However, the Iron Bridge is only one part of the WHS, even if it is the most extensively photographed and analysis of the dataset of Instagram images revealed a number of additional tropes that are worth examining through analysis of some typical examples. Urry and Larsen (2011) identify a number of subjects for the tourist gaze. These include what they term ‘unique objects’, which the Iron Bridge would certainly qualify as. Additionally they highlight that ‘signs’ are also important for tourists, referring to things which represent a larger idea or theme. In this situation Main Street USA, Disneyland, can signify the historic

American town (Urry and Larsen, 2011, p19). The tropes identifiable in the dataset of Instagram images include general representation of 'heritage-ness' and rural landscapes which work as signs of conceptualisations of the English past which go beyond Ironbridge Gorge yet give context to its experience by tourists (see section 5.2.2 and 5.3.4). 'Heritage' is characterised by images of the Ironbridge townscape, focusing on tiny streets and narrow stairs, or ironwork detailing. The trope of Ironbridge Gorge as a natural landscape shows images of the woodland areas or the river. Another trend is a combination of these two elements, where a feature of the built environment is shown with natural elements in both the fore- and background. This fits within broader themes of photographic practice, but also creates distance between the photographer and the subject of the image, setting the structure into a timeless and naturalised environment which aesthetic ideals suggest should be observed from afar.

6.4.3 Shopping Spaces

Images which show the shopping spaces of Ironbridge Gorge occupy a substantial 20% of the total tourist-produced Instagram images analysed. A typical example is shown in Figure 6.12, which is a view of the corner of Darlingtons shop on the Wharfage and the buildings behind. This is one of the most common views of the town in Ironbridge represented on Instagram, accounting for 10% of all the shopping space images. There are a number of features: the attractive blue painted frontage of Darlingtons, the quietness and unpopulated view of the sidestreet, the decorative ironwork, and the brickwork typical of the local area. It is intriguing that it is this view which is represented so often. To take it the photographer must stand right at the edge of the shopping tourist space, just on the invisible but much felt line between the private residential areas of the township and the tourist space of the

Wharfage. This adds an air of mystery and authenticity to the image, a window into the domestic world of those who live in Ironbridge. In reality of course, the first building is actually a Bed and Breakfast; the authenticity is imagined and the mystery only exists as long as one does not actually follow the path. This image fits strongly within the group of those which present Ironbridge Gorge as an ‘olde-worldy’ environment. While this image does not have a filter to suggest age, these are also common, as are images of classic cars on the streets here. All of this contributes to a representation of an ageless Ironbridge, where the past is present, but also one where the past is not particularly industrial in nature.

Figure 6.12: Typical view of part of the shopping space in Ironbridge on Instagram (ablaaaarrrr, 2017, reproduced with permission)

Figure 6.13: View of the Severn Valley Way, one of the natural spaces in Ironbridge Gorge (stephipearce, 2017, reproduced with permission)

6.4.4 The natural landscape

While in the minority (9%) there was also a distinct group of images which reflect tourist performances carried out in the woodlands and by, or on, the river (natural spaces). Images of the river predominate, reflecting the fact that they can be taken from the busiest tourist areas of the Gorge as well as the quieter ones. Figure 6.13 is an example of a typical 'woodland' image from Instagram. In this the only indication of the location comes from the written description. The image shows the path disappearing into the woodland, with the trees forming the majority of the image. The caption makes it clear that the context for the image is a walk and they have added the hashtag #therapeutic and #relaxationtime to emphasise that this was an act of leisure rather than necessity. The natural space, as discussed above, is framed as a place for relaxation (see section 6.3.2), not industry and the natural features are

given emphasis, despite the fact that the footpath shown is the route of an old railway line which served many of the former factories and quarries in the area.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at how the ways in which tourists interact with Ironbridge Gorge affects the communication of World Heritage values. If we consider the movements and behaviour of tourists as performances we can reflect on the influence of the staging, the stage managers and the artistic intentions of the performers themselves. In other words, all the efforts put into marketing, managing and communicating Ironbridge Gorge, as discussed in Chapter 5, create the staging for the interaction of tourists with it and in that setting the tourists carry out their own individually motivated activities. Not only that, but the work of creating the tourist destination of Ironbridge Gorge is not complete without the interaction of the tourists.

The first part of this chapter looked at the ways in which visitors talk about World Heritage, both their understandings of the status and the values they believe it to represent. This showed that the designation itself is poorly understood or appreciated, and even the values of the site are often diminished through clichéd framing, emphasising outstanding rather than universally valuable facets of the site's story. Following this there was an examination of the ways in which the intention and motivation behind tourist behaviour leads to the possibility of communicating value, but can also lead to the lack of it. Often tourists are motivated by relaxation and leisure and use heritage as a comfortable backdrop against which to perform these things. Even when visitors are drawn into deeper engagement it is not necessarily with the site but with other aspects of their own identity and relationships. The third section of the chapter explored how performance relates to narrative through the

sharing of photographs online, connecting the mobilities of tourism in the Gorge to the images produced through these and highlighting once more that it is cliché and trope which finds more grounding than universality and meaning. In concluding this chapter I want to consider several aspects of this in more detail, reflecting on the significance of these narratives and performances in relation to the research questions.

Tourist performances in Ironbridge Gorge bear similarity to those found at tourist attractions, particularly heritage tourist attractions, the world over. Tourists wander, photograph, admire and investigate as part of their personalised attempts to create the leisure experiences they desire. Ironbridge Gorge as a place shapes these performances, subtly encouraging particular behaviours whilst discouraging others. As explored in Chapter 5 different organisations and individuals help to shape these processes, and themselves attempt to convey particular narratives about Ironbridge Gorge to visitors. In all of the discussions so far, about the tourist performances and narratives of visitors to Ironbridge Gorge and how they relate to engagement with the place and with the World Heritage values, there has been little evidence of any guaranteed communication of value. I believe a considerable element of this relates to the importance of the intentionality and choices of the visitor themselves.

As outlined in Chapter 2 (see section 2.3.2), there is discussion as to how much ability tourists have to act with agency in the highly constructed environments that are often produced for them (e.g. Cheong and Miller, 2000). Despite this, there is plenty of evidence that there is room within the practices of tourism for tourists to playfully subvert expected behaviour. Smith (2012, p15) writes in his manifesto on 'Counter-Tourism', that tourists are not "passive dupes" but "are people who pick and choose what and how they experience, who mix and match things and their feelings about them, making up their own leisure and

heritage as they go along". Thus, even when structured and clichéd, tourist performances in Ironbridge Gorge reflect genuinely individual choices and experiences. As a result there is potential for the same spaces and performances to be more meaningful to some visitors than others.

How, then, can those involved in communicating the values of Ironbridge Gorge, mediate this divide between the tourists' intention to merely enjoy the Gorge and their desire to engage them with the stories of its importance? One aspect of this may be to help visitors develop greater knowledge of where they are. Representatives from the local DMO told me that visitors "walk around the Gorge and (…) have no idea where they are and what it is" (Interview with Discover Telford), something which SGCT have been attempting to ameliorate using 3D drawn maps to help visitors gain a perspective on the physical landscape (Interview with Russell Rowley, SGCT).

Walking is already one of the most popular pursuits of tourists in the Gorge; one IGMT staff member phrased it "walking is top top top!" While knowledge and walking are not inherently linked, there is the potential for communication to take place. Solnit (2001, p69) writes that walking can, most of the time, be purely practical, but can be infused with meaning. She uses examples of the Stations of the Cross, the labyrinth, and the maze, to show that, when accompanied by stories, walking can become an intensely significant experience. These places "offer up stories we can walk into to inhabit bodily, stories we trace with our feet as well as our eyes" (Solnit, 2001, p71). Central to this is the potential for intimacy. In Ironbridge Gorge there are many stories and storytellers and many walking tourists but also many things which enforce a distance between visitors and what they have come to see. By thinking about these places as storyscapes perhaps we have a better opportunity to infuse

their walked/lived experience by visitors with meaning. Tourist performances do not have to be more than just acts of wandering around, taking photographs and shopping, to have the possibility of being transformed by meaning and value. It is not the performances that need to change, necessarily, but the way in which these are recognised and capitalised upon by the organisations and individuals at work in the Gorge.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

In 2002 the World Heritage Committee announced the Budapest Declaration, identifying new strategic objectives to take forward the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. The fourth of these was "to increase public awareness, involvement and support for World Heritage through communication" (UNESCO WHC, 2002, 3e). This was not a new idea as the emphasis on the need to present World Heritage to the public had been a part of the obligations of States Parties outlined in the Convention itself. It did, however, bring a new emphasis on the significance of communication, elevating it alongside conservation, credibility, capacity building and, later, communities (UNESCO WHC, 2007). Despite this, the communication of World Heritage to tourists is given relatively little weight as a core aspect of WHS management, certainly not when contrasted with conservation or even with education (UNESCO WHC, 2017). Tourists are seen as a potential source of income, as a resource for capacity building and as a potential threat to the authenticity and integrity of sites but not as a key constituency for the communication of World Heritage values (see section 2.4.3). As a result it is not surprising that whether and how World Heritage values are communicated at designated sites is a comparatively under-researched topic. This thesis has attempted to contribute to the growing body of work attempting to fill this gap.

In this study I have asked what role World Heritage values play in the construction of a tourist destination using the case study of Ironbridge Gorge (UK) to examine the issues. This question recognises both the multiplicity of values that can be ascribed to a place, of which

those pertaining to the site's OUV may only be part. In order to support this overall objective I developed three research questions which allowed me to explore the different aspects of the case study site. The first was to examine what the World Heritage values of Ironbridge Gorge are and to discover how these are formally communicated to visitors. At the heart of this question there is an implicit acknowledgement that it is not possible for any one visitor to access the entirety of potential interpretation and information available but despite this it is vital to know what that maximum possible extent is. This allowed me to examine patterns in the production of information, both organisationally and spatially within the site, as well as look at how the different elements of Ironbridge Gorge's OUV and its World Heritage status are presented. The second question addressed the experience of visitors, asking how different performances and the locations these are focused on affect the way that tourists encounter World Heritage values. Finally, the third question asked how tourists represent their visits to Ironbridge Gorge and the role of the site's World Heritage values in those narratives.

By using a combination of qualitative research methods I was able to bring an ethnographic lens to examining tourists' encounters with World Heritage values as well as a spatial one, allowing me to develop a landscape-wide perspective on the issue of the communication. Specifically, this involved the combination of interviews with both tourists and tourism industry stakeholders, analysis of tourist-produced materials and those produced for them, participant and non-participant observation and archival research. Primarily I took an ethnographic approach, although I was limited in the intensity of the study by the short term patterns of tourist visitation. I combined this with a study of the spaces of Ironbridge Gorge, drawing on the work of cultural geographers to develop an examination of how tourists encounter and engage with the site.

In Chapters 5 and 6 the ways that ways that Ironbridge Gorge is constructed as a destination and how it is experienced by tourists was examined. Through this analysis, three overarching themes emerged. The first relates to the ways in which OUVs are communicated to tourists, particularly the way that, frequently, the 'Outstanding' is divorced from the 'Universal'. In Ironbridge Gorge this can be seen in the way that the Iron Bridge is given precedence over the Old Furnace and more broadly in the common use of comparison to emphasise the significance of a WHS. The second theme is that of dissonance between expectation, imaginary and OUV. In Ironbridge Gorge visitors encounter a scenic and rural-seeming river gorge at the same time as they are told the story of the early days of the Industrial Revolution. Overcoming that dissonance requires either considerable knowledge and imagination on the tourists' part or for those involved in communicating the site to help them in doing so. The third theme is the tensions between the power of individuals and organisations to tell the particular stories of a place and the performative and co-constructive power of tourists themselves to transform their encounter with place and story. The role of UNESCO and its Advisory Bodies will be discussed in reflecting on how consideration of all potential co-constructors affects how we treat the communication of World Heritage values. At the end of this chapter the strengths and limitations of this research are outlined and possible directions for future research identified. Finally, there is a reflection on what the results of this research mean for the communication of World Heritage values in general and at the case study site of Ironbridge Gorge.

7.2 Communication of OUV to tourists

The concept that there are places on earth so special that their loss would affect people across the world is at the core of the principle of Outstanding Universal Value (UNESCO, 1972).

This category of heritage value is one that can only be authorised by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, although sites considered to possess it are nominated by the nations they are located within (UNESCO, 1972). As such, OUV is something which has been quantified and qualified over the last forty years, evolving alongside the Convention to become the multifaceted concept that it is today. Jokilehto (1999) has argued that universality, in particular, is the founding principle of the Convention, representing the fundamental belief that humanity shares some level of ownership, and as a result responsibility, for particular places. The 'outstanding' can almost be considered the lesser of the two elements; a way of distinguishing features which warrant the elevation of specific places onto the List at the expense of others but not, ultimately, the *raison d'être* for the Convention itself.

It would seem logical that the ascription of OUV to a site, representing as it does such a high ideal, would be at the centre of the narratives communicated to tourists visiting such a place. However, as this research and others before it have shown (e.g. Smith, 2002), World Heritage is often seen as fairly irrelevant by visitors to WHS or, as one of the stakeholders I interviewed put it, "too academic" (Interview with IGMT staff member, 16 March 2017). While the 'outstanding' elements of a site are easy to portray, the universal, the aspect most significant to World Heritage, was found to be more difficult to translate to visitors. In this research I have attempted to find the role played by World Heritage values, the OUV of Ironbridge Gorge, in the tourist encounter with the site and here I would like to discuss what the results might mean, both in this landscape and more broadly.

7.2.1 Communication of OUV in Ironbridge Gorge WHS

In Chapter 3 the evolution of the way that the values of Ironbridge Gorge have been understood and articulated to visitors was examined. In the eighteenth century Ironbridge Gorge was praised as a symbol of industrial progress but, over time, the area came to be valued more as a place of historic significance and natural beauty. Under the curatorship of the IGMT a 'package' of narratives began to come together. This grouped together specific motifs, particularly the importance of the Iron Bridge as the first of its kind in the world and Darby's Old Furnace, important for the innovations which took place there. When the site was nominated to the List in 1986 those motifs were translated into how the OUV of Ironbridge Gorge were inscribed, alongside recognition of the wider significance of the whole of the industrial landscape in the Gorge as an ensemble (UNESCO, no date-a). In Chapters 5 and 6 the ways in which these values are presented to visitors, the effects that these have on the construction of tourist spaces and the ways that tourists encounter them was considered. It was found that there was a prevalence of superlative language, both in the way the site is represented to and by tourists, which reflects an emphasis on the outstanding rather than the universal.

There were other aspects which were specific to the situation in Ironbridge Gorge. One feature of this WHS is the complexity of the way in which it is managed, with several trusts, private businesses, DMOs and administrative authorities involved (see section 3.3.1). One of the results of this has been the lack of continuity in the way that the OUV of the WHS is communicated, which is compounded by the overwhelming amount of interpretative material made available to tourists. This is further complicated by the difficulties of

communicating the values of industrial heritage to tourists, something which is notably a challenge in Ironbridge Gorge which is a highly scenic landscape.

7.2.2 Issues of comparison

One of the central tensions within the work of the Convention is that the List groups together sites, places and landscapes considered valuable because of their uniqueness and exceptional quality, into a group which implies their equality with each other. As Bruman (2014, p2181, quoting Wilk, 1995) states, "World Heritage has become a 'global system of common difference'". This equalising approach is a direct result of some of the most fundamental features of what the Convention and UNESCO itself set out to do. The preamble to the UNESCO Constitution (1945, p5) famously states that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed". It goes on to say that it is ignorance that has led to mistrust and war and thus it is "diffusion of culture… the education of humanity" and, ultimately, "the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind" that will bring about peace (UNESCO, 1945, p5). As a UNESCO endeavour, the World Heritage Convention was spurred into being as a way of addressing the practicalities of the Constitution, one of the objectives of which was to ensure conservation of the world's heritage. By bringing together the most outstanding examples of natural and cultural heritage the List actively reinforces the underpinning belief that humanity shares in the 'inheritance' of these sites and landscapes. However, for all the centrality of this discourse in the concept of World Heritage it may actually inhibit the communication of the very values which humanity is supposed to share in. This is especially seen in the common practice of comparing one site to another on the basis of their joint status as WHSs.

In Ironbridge Gorge there are frequent allusions to the site being as ‘important as the Pyramids’ (see sections 3.2.3, 5.2.1 and 6.2.1). There are many useful ways in which comparison might aid the communication of values to visitors, such as using other sites, themselves exemplary of specific moments in the development of industry, to put the Ironbridge Gorge story in a global and regional context. Making meaning from a comparison to the Pyramids is rather more difficult. Interviews with visitors showed that this often seemed to be a non sequitur; the lack of clear connections between the sites often leading them to reject the message they were being presented with. This was compounded by the absence of any interpretation about the concept of universality, the only thing that can really be said to link the Pyramids and the Ironbridge Gorge. Pocock (1997, p267) stated that the Old Furnace at Coalbrookdale is, perhaps, one of the only cultural sites which could truly be said to have global value, numbering it alongside early hominid sites and Jerusalem in terms of its significance. Despite this, when compared directly to one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World the majority of visitors felt that Ironbridge Gorge was simply not of the same status. This form of direct comparison between sites is incredibly common and is, perhaps, so essential to the very concept of World Heritage that it cannot be removed but it is a significant problem for the communication of World Heritage value.

7.2.3 Outstanding rather than universal

The absence of universal value as justification for grand comparisons between a place like Ironbridge Gorge and the Pyramids was seen to be part of a broader trend towards the communication of outstanding, but less often universal, values at the site. In Chapter 6 one of the themes was how particular forms of tourist behaviour allow room for intimacy whilst others enforce distance with the heritage site. This was a crucial element in creating spaces

where World Heritage values can be communicated and was seen to be influenced not just by the intentionality of tourists themselves but also the way the site was managed to encourage certain performances and discourage others. Di Giovine (2009) placed the concept of universality at the core of his description of the 'heritagescape'; a model where UNESCO is working to create imagined community (after Anderson, 2006) through facilitating tourism to places particularly identified as being part of a shared global heritage. Using this model, it is possible to consider universal values as something which create an imaginative space in which intimacy between a place and a visitor might be formed.

Further, the outstanding, for all its potential attractiveness to visitors, may be more likely to create distance if not tempered by universality. In Chapter 6 the ways in which tourists relate to the Iron Bridge and the Old Furnace were considered, revealing that tourists appear to experience the greatest connection with the structures through the physical intimacies of crossing the Bridge and climbing up to the mouth of the blast furnace. When stepping back to observe, a common element of tourist performances relating to sight-seeing and photographic practices, a distance is created. It was also shown how the emphasis on the Iron Bridge over all other aspects of Ironbridge Gorge WHS has led to the diminishment of tourist narratives about the values of the site to just those which could be summed up in clichéd phrases. As a result, the most common ways in which tourists understood the values of Ironbridge Gorge was as having the 'world's first Iron Bridge', or as being 'the birthplace of industry' but often these easily recited statements were the result of repetition rather than reflection and were not indicative of deeper understanding.

7.2.4 Evolution

One thing that became increasingly clear as I carried out this research was that perceptions and representations of value are something that will change and evolve through time. Ironbridge Gorge's SOUV reflects a specific moment in the understanding of the site's history and its global significance. More recent research has emphasised the importance of 17th century steel working in the area, with a site in Coalbrookdale being the earliest of its kind excavated in this country (Belford and Ross, 2007), while the Workers' Walks laid out in the late eighteenth century have been referred to as "perhaps the first publicly accessible designed landscape" (Devlin, 2018, p71). These aspects can be acknowledged within the communication of the World Heritage values of Ironbridge Gorge through the recognition, as part of the OUV, of the significance of the whole industrial landscape (UNESCO, no date-c). The point remains, however, that the perception of the values of Ironbridge Gorge has shifted over time and is likely do so again in the future.

The strength of the concept of OUV is the universal; perceptions of outstanding value are liable to change as new information comes to light and fashions alter, but the concept that there is something about a place that is shared between everyone on earth is one that has flexibility inherently woven into it. By placing the burden of the significance on what it means to humanity, rather than purely on the specific qualities of a site, there is room for that to evolve as our perceptions of a place change. As Beck (2006, p522) has stated, "universal values are an idealistic quest and will continue to be renegotiated and reassessed through debate and conflict". The case study site of Ironbridge Gorge, which is described as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, played a significant role in the development of fossil fuel-powered manufacturing and the resulting effects on pollution and global climate.

These aspects of its universality would not have been recognised a few decades ago but today could form a new point of connection for visitors. Further, a WHS such as Ironbridge Gorge has multiple audiences: tourists from many different backgrounds as well as locals. While the outstanding may appear the most obvious and will always form a central part of the way WHSs are celebrated and enjoyed, their universal values can be, potentially, shared by all who encounter them.

7.3 Dissonance and communication

One of the themes that emerged throughout this research has been the tension between the inscribed OUV of Ironbridge Gorge and the way that the area is perceived and represented. The features of Ironbridge Gorge which justify its inscription on the World Heritage List relate to its significance in the Industrial Revolution, primarily the surviving elements of eighteenth century features. However, as a heritage tourist attraction it is valued as a quaint and rural landscape where an authentic 'sense of the past' survives but this sense is not particularly industrial in nature. This gap between the OUV of the site and the tourism imaginaries of it is a fundamental barrier to the communication of World Heritage values to tourists. In this section I will examine the ways in which generic qualities and cliché are barriers to communicating the specificity of a place. Some of the processes which produce the 'heritageness' of Ironbridge Gorge are fundamental to conservation, or else are created by much wider societal forces which go far beyond any individual site.

7.3.1 World Heritage values and the tourism imaginaries of Ironbridge Gorge

While the ways in which Ironbridge Gorge has been promoted to potential tourists and presented to them during their visits has changed over the centuries, one aspect has remained a part of this since the eighteenth century. This is what can be termed the rural imaginary of

Ironbridge Gorge, something first seen in paintings and descriptions of the area in the eighteenth century, is commented on in Thomas Cook's (1946) advertisement for Coalbrookdale and is still very much a part of how the Gorge is understood today. The steep, forest-clad slopes of Ironbridge Gorge have long appealed to visitors seeking rural scenery as well as the industrialists who valued the easy access that this landscape gave to mineral resources, fuel and transport links. The natural scenery and the industrial history of Ironbridge Gorge are irrevocably interwoven and lie at the heart of the dissonance created between how visitors imagine a rural destination and their imagination of industrial heritage. Further, the significant environmental toll taken on the physical stability of the Gorge and the necessity of creating safe, hygienic living conditions led to considerable conservation and environmental mitigation being required in the last 50 years.

In Chapter 5 I examined the effects that these vital works have had in creating a 'heritageised' and 'ruralised' landscape in the Gorge (see section 5.3.4). These processes of heritageisation and ruralisation have become combined with deeply held convictions about what potential visitors to Ironbridge Gorge and the wider Shropshire area are seeking in a destination. The result of this has been a specific portrayal of the area becoming embedded in the tourism imaginaries of it. This is characterised by motifs of a quaint village, tranquil river valley and a legacy of industry which time has gently reclaimed and softened. This actively distances the industrial past in Ironbridge Gorge, creating a barrier to the communication of the World Heritage values of the site. Further confusion has arisen through the emphasis on the Victorian era in how the area is marketed and encountered by visitors, both subtly through the generic quaintness of the area and specifically through the largest visitor attraction being a recreated Victorian Town. While an interesting and

important period in history it is not one which relates particularly to the OUVs of the site which are more focused on the evidence of industry in the eighteenth century.

7.3.2 Generic qualities and cliché: barriers to communicating World Heritage values

In their work on the 'tourist gaze' Urry and Larsen (2011) discuss the role of signs in framing the way tourists encounter and interact with places. They argue that to look at, for example, an English village scene, is to gaze on something which could represent any English village from any time period (Urry and Larsen, 2011, pp4, 17). Analysis of tourist-produced imagery of Ironbridge Gorge showed the popularity of street scenes from around the Wharfage, a popular area of tourist-focused shops and cafes laid out along the riverside and close to the Iron Bridge. There were also numerous images of what could be classed as 'woodland views'. In Chapter 6 I discussed how these two tropes found in tourist-produced imagery of Ironbridge Gorge indicate a broader trend evidenced across the wider project which showed how many tourists interacted with the site in a way that could have been interchangeable with any rural village destination in the country (see sections 5.2.2, 5.3.4, 6.4). In part this relates to site specific factors, such as the effects of conservation work on smoothing out the ravages of former industry into a more stable, but also more conventional, landscape. However, the identity of Ironbridge Gorge as a destination fits well within what Watson (2013) has described as 'the rural-historic'. This, he argues, is a powerful imaginary which helps shape the nature of heritage in England's rural and urban spaces, forming a dichotomy between the countryside as somewhere perceived as pre-industrial and the city as a more modern industrial type of place (Watson, 2013). The imaginaries of Ironbridge Gorge examined in this thesis fit well within this model which would suggest that there are much wider societal trends involved in how Ironbridge Gorge has come to be perceived.

In this context, where the generic qualities that it possesses have become one of the apparent strengths of the way the area is marketed to potential visitors, it is difficult to make room for the specificity and uniqueness of the site's World Heritage values. The performances of being a tourist in a place such as Ironbridge Gorge are likely to always be interchangeable with other places: wandering and window shopping, photography and indulging in treats such as ice cream and fish and chips. The difficulty arises when not only are tourist performances relatively generic but also the place and place narratives visitors are presented with. One tourism industry stakeholder I interviewed noted that it was the World Heritage values of Ironbridge Gorge which make people less likely to say "There's an Iron Bridge there, well so what?" Further, they reflected that:

> if, heaven forbid, we lost WHS status… the offer is very well established – the museums, Bridge, it's a nice place to sit outside and eat your lunch on a sunny day – but perhaps perception of historic value would be diminished.

While the details and specific values of the Gorge are common themes in the formal interpretation of the site provided through the museums and static interpretation panels there are hundreds of thousands of tourists who do not visit a museum during their visit and my observation showed that signage was also often left unread. As discussed above, tourists are frequently aware of a more clichéd version of the site's OUV: that it is the home of the world's first iron bridge and that it is the 'birthplace' of the Industrial Revolution. This indicates the effectiveness of marketing in providing interpretation to visitors but also the limitations of it as it is difficult to include nuanced and detailed information in a slogan. The result of these combined factors is that visitors often perceive the values of Ironbridge Gorge in a rather vague and generic way, citing that it is 'historic', or 'quaint', 'traditional', or even just that it is 'heritage' (see section 6.2.1). While visitor appreciation may be high neither

the outstanding nor universal aspects of the World Heritage values of the site are effectively communicated.

7.4 Co-construction and World Heritage destinations

One of the important questions relating to the engagement of tourists with places is whether the tourists are powerful agents in their own right or whether all their interactions are constrained by the known rituals of tourist performance and the physical and authoritative structures in the places they visit (see Cheong and Miller, 2000). The reality is likely to lie somewhere between these two extremes and will vary enormously given the differing natures of tourist attractions and tourists themselves. Within studies of tourism the idea that tourists are creative agents and co-constructors of the places they interact with is not new. Some of these studies (e.g. Edensor, 1998; Chronis, 2005) have specifically investigated the behaviour of tourists at heritage sites. There is also, especially in fields such as Public Archaeology, a considerable body of work addressing the co-constructive role of the public, often local communities, in creating meaning, value and place through heritage (e.g. Jones, 2004; Isherwood, 2013). However, in the discussion of WHSs and their meanings and values these ideas are largely absent. The recognition of the role of communities is only relatively recent, formally being acknowledged with the addition of the 'fifth C' in 2007 (UNESCO WHC, 2007). Tourism is still seen as something with economic value, particularly in relation to capacity building, but little further value and, indeed, largely in the context of a threat to the authenticity and integrity of sites (UNESCO WHC, 2017). In this research the effects of the divide between the World Heritage aspects of the site and the tourism parts emerged in multiple contexts and it is something I will discuss further here.

7.4.1 Shifting power relations in Ironbridge Gorge WHS

In Ironbridge Gorge, as outlined in Chapter 3 and examined in more detail in Chapter 5 (see sections 3.3.1 and 5.2), there are numerous organisations involved in managing the site and interpreting it for tourists. This causes some specific issues, one of which is the way that the interpretation of the 'natural' parts of the site is the responsibility of SGCT with the 'monumental' parts interpreted by English Heritage and IGMT, a problematic split seen across the management of 'natural' and 'cultural' heritage worldwide (discussed in Harrison, 2015). One result of this is that visitors engaging with SGCT's interpretative materials will be presented with the industrial history of the Gorge in its landscape context while visitors to the monuments and museums can potentially miss the connections between the different parts of the Gorge. More generally there is a division between the tourist-focused individuals and organisations and those focusing on conservation and physical management with the World Heritage aspects largely considered the work of the latter. This might seem contradictory as the key organisations involved in managing the WHS almost all have dual roles of management and interpretation. However, the roles within these organisations are often compartmentalised.

An example of this is the WHS Steering Group, a group which includes representatives from IGMT, English Heritage and T&W Council, all of whom have a role either in marketing the area to tourists and/or interpreting the site to them. However, the choice of individuals to sit on this group reflects a focus on conservation and management, not communication with tourists. While this group includes representation from local businesses and groups such as the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (see section 3.3.1) the absence of tourism-focused individuals from some of the largest and most influential organisations acts to further

separate World Heritage from the minds of those on the tourism side of things. The Steering Group is not considered as a platform for bringing together people working in tourism in the Gorge while those that are, such as the T&W Council run VEF, are largely separate from the management of the WHS.

It is not coincidental that tourism industry stakeholders saw World Heritage as something largely external to them. It was seen as something which gave a slight advantage in attracting visitors but little else (see section 5.2.1). The result is that many of the most powerful voices in communicating value to tourists visiting the site do not feel connected to it as a WHS. Stakeholder participation in the creation of WHS Management Plans has long been recognised as important to the process (e.g. Cleere, 2010) recognising that getting buy in to these policies is essential to looking after these sites. In the same way, equivalent buy in is necessary for the communication of value to tourists.

7.4.2 The role of tourists in co-constructing World Heritage values

Even if World Heritage values were communicated consistently and energetically across every part of the site this would not guarantee that tourists would engage with them. It is important to consider also the role of tourists themselves in the ongoing creation and recreation of value. The OUV of Ironbridge Gorge, those elements at the heart of its 'World-Heritage-ness', are very specifically related to the evidence of the eighteenth and nineteenth industries in the area. The story of these industries is told through the museums, through interpretative signage and printed materials and more informally through the images and symbols of this history represented across the site (see Appendix A). However, as examined in Chapter 6, tourist performances in Ironbridge Gorge are more general, focused on leisure rather than specifically on heritage. The natural aspects of the Gorge and the opportunities

the iconic structure of the Iron Bridge create for sightseeing, photography, walking and relaxing are highly valued.

As shown in Chapter 6 and discussed further in this chapter the 'outstanding' elements of the site's OUV do feature in tourist narratives of the site, reflecting their significance to visitors. However, the universal aspects, the impact on people worldwide of the industrial innovations represented in a place such as Ironbridge Gorge, were much more rarely commented on. In many cases Ironbridge Gorge was discussed by visitors as 'just' somewhere they come out to. This is intriguing as it can be seen to demonstrate both a lack of deeper engagement with the values of the site whilst simultaneously indicating a sense of ownership and belonging. Ironbridge Gorge is seen as an appropriate place for people to visit, somewhere they know they will be able to come to and do the things they want to do. Moreover, many of the tourists I interviewed spoke of the importance of 'heritage', albeit in its generic form, and how they believed in the need to look after places like Ironbridge Gorge for future generations.

The question is whether this valuation of the site for its age and associations with the past indicates that tourists are being brought into the processes of ascribing specific World Heritage values or whether they are constructing an alternative set of values. There is certainly evidence that tourists accept and reproduce the 'outstanding value' elements of the narratives of Ironbridge Gorge, posting images of the Iron Bridge alongside comments relating to it being the 'first in the world' or the 'birthplace of the Industrial Revolution' on platforms such as Instagram. Evidence of wider perception and valuation of the full spectrum of the World Heritage values of the site, particularly the 'universal' aspects, is less clear. Instead tourists are more likely to talk about the site in relation to a generic, and mostly pre-

industrial, sense of the past. The co-constructive role of tourists seems to do little more than tie Ironbridge Gorge more firmly into wider English narratives of a slightly vague and nostalgic rural past.

Part of this issue relates to whether we are considering the co-constructive role of tourists in relation to the site as a destination or specifically in relation to the World Heritage values of it. Tourists are active co-producers both of their own experience of the site and of the spaces they encounter. However, their role as co-producers of value within the WHS is far less clear. The values communicated to tourists are filtered through many layers of organisational control and the evidence discussed here indicates that tourists either replicate these values in their own narratives or do not engage with them, outwardly, at all. It would appear that, in relation to co-production, tourists have far greater agency in the construction of their experiences than on the heritage of Ironbridge Gorge.

7.4.3 Responsibility

Ultimately, it is important to consider who has the responsibility, and the capacity, to communicate World Heritage values. The Convention places the burden of communication onto the State Party, stating that:

> The States Parties to this Convention shall endeavour by all appropriate means, and in particular by educational and information programmes, to strengthen appreciation and respect by their peoples of the cultural and natural heritage (UNESCO, 1972, Article 27.1).

While the focus of Article 27 is primarily on education as a medium for communicating World Heritage values, the wording is broad enough to include the public as a whole, making tourists a key audience. The burden of responsibility for this is given to the State Party which, in the case of the UK, means Historic England on behalf of the Department of Digital,

Culture, Media and Sport (UKNatComm, no date). This same government department sponsors the national tourism agency, VisitBritain/VisitEngland (no date) so one possible mechanism for the communication of World Heritage would be through this. Another interpretation would be that it is Historic England's role, but as a body with an advisory capacity rather than a public facing one this would be impractical. Currently this responsibility is not made particularly clear and is generally assumed to be the role of the WHSs themselves but, as seen at Ironbridge Gorge, the management of sites is complex and can involve numerous organisations. Without this responsibility being defined it is unlikely to become a priority and in the case of physically large and complex sites may well be impossible.

The Convention shows that the responsibility for communicating World Heritage is given to States Parties and, practically, to whomever an individual country delegates this to. However, unlike other responsibilities such as the creation of Management Plans this does not feature clearly in the Operational Guidelines (UNESCO WHC, 2017). At the 2012 meeting of the World Heritage Committee the World Heritage Tourism Programme was discussed (UNESCO WHC, 2012). One of the things that was agreed on was that:

> the concept and significance of the OUV of World Heritage properties is less well understood. Making tourism stakeholders aware of and appreciate the heritage values is key to presenting the World Heritage properties. There is a need to communicate these values in a way that is readily understood and explains its significance within a local, national and international context (UNESCO WHC, 2012, p2).

Further, one of the key elements identified as being needed to bring this about was that "visitors understand and gain an appreciation of the meaning of Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage" (UNESCO WHC, 2012, p5). Despite this the toolkits produced through the Sustainable Tourism Initiative give no consideration of values beyond the economic

(UNESCO, no date-f). If the communication of World Heritage values is ever to become a significant focus, there need to be practical guidelines for how it needs to take place rather than just an ideal. In this thesis I have explored some of the complexities and issues of this at a single case study site but a larger-scale investigation across States Parties and sites is necessary to comprehensively understand the current situtation. There are already structures in place both to carry out further research into this on a much larger scale than this case study and to investigate practical solutions. These include the UNESCO National Commissions and through structures such as Periodic Reporting and WHS Management Plans. If the communication of World Heritage values is important to the World Heritage Centre then there are ways in which this importance could be effectively communicated. If co-ownership is at the heart of globally shared responsibility to protect heritage then conservation and communication of values cannot be separated: good communication is how the values of places will be conserved into the future and as such, this should be given greater consideration at a UNESCO level.

7.5 Strengths and limitations of this research

7.5.1. Strengths

This research has taken the form of an in-depth case study investigation into the communication of World Heritage values to a specific community of interest, tourists, in Ironbridge Gorge. As such I have aimed to contribute both to developing a greater understanding of Ironbridge Gorge and to the broader realm of research into World Heritage, tourism and value. The former is important in its own right, coming at a time of major anniversaries which are a natural moment to look forward into how things might be done in the future and also when significant conservation work and substantial investment is being

put into the site (Sullivan, 2017; English Heritage, no date-b). I interviewed numerous tourism industry stakeholders during the process of carrying out the research, which also gave me the opportunity to develop links with the community and discuss the potential uses of this research for them. By working across the different areas of the site I was able to go beyond the type of market research typically carried out and I hope that the results will be of value to the site going forward. In relation to the broader spectrum of research into World Heritage this study has a number of strengths, specifically its use of a case study to move beyond the meta-narratives of World Heritage discourse into the realities of an individual site. Ironbridge Gorge is an industrial site, which means that this research provides an insight into a type of site which is beginning to be inscribed in much greater numbers than previously. It is also scenic and rural which reflects an often rather different group of sites on the List. While there are also clear limitations related to this case study, which will be discussed below, there are areas where this study contributes towards addressing specific gaps or furthering previous research.

This research is part of a wider project focusing on the communication of World Heritage value at Ironbridge Gorge. When combined with the other three projects (Davies, 2018; Raine, forthcoming; Trelka, 2018) this will allow an unusually detailed consideration of the multiple aspects relating to the communication of World Heritage value. Previous research on perceptions of World Heritage have often focused on levels of awareness and enthusiasm for World Heritage status and brand itself, rather than the interaction with the actual values represented by the inscription (e.g. Moscardo et al, 2001; Smith, 2002; Dewar et al 2012; King and Halfpenny, 2014). These studies have shown that tourists are often largely unaware of World Heritage status, something which I have found to be replicated in Ironbridge Gorge. However, I have also found that the World Heritage values themselves are often not relevant

for visitors and stakeholders alike and that the universality of this site is frequently overshadowed by the more conventional tourist values of the outstanding and the scenic.

By taking an approach derived from tourism studies, particularly the disciplines of cultural geography and anthropology, I have been able to move away from the more conventional heritage studies approaches which frequently look at tourism as a phenomenon to be managed rather than investigated in its own right. I believe this is an important idea for heritage studies to embrace; tourists are not just a threat but a cultural force without which the concept of OUV has only limited audience. Di Giovine (2009, p6) has argued that tourists are at the heart of the constructive work of the World Heritage Convention, acting as its missionaries as individuals travel the world and then return home bearing news of what they have seen. However, if the processes by which this might happen are not understood then this is only ever going to be a theoretical ideal. By taking a micro-level approach to the communication of World Heritage value it has been possible to challenge these macro-level theories and provide a useful case study for future research to compare or challenge.

7.5.2 Research limitations

As with any project there were inevitable limitations and moments where decisions were made which shaped the research as it went forward. Some of these limitations are the reverse side of a strength, others are inherent to the subject matter and still others are the things one only becomes aware of with hindsight. The first and possibly most significant limitation of this research is that it focuses on a single site. This allowed a time depth to the research and a quality of engagement which would not have been possible to replicate over two or more places and, when considered alongside the partner projects (Davies, 2018; Raine, forthcoming; Trelka, 2018), forms a multifaceted view on Ironbridge Gorge. Nevertheless,

it does mean that the broader implications of the research at a wider UNESCO or even British level can only be suggested rather than evidenced.

Further, the implicit nature of tourists as transient, temporary visitors brings with it significant problems for the researcher. Valuable studies of tourists and tourism in the past have focused, particularly, on direct study of people who are tourists (e.g. Harrison, 2002; Tucker, 2005) or on how tourists behave within specific places (e.g Bærenholdt et al. 2004; Edensor 1998). As this project was focused on exploring the communication of values within a single site the latter approach was chosen. This means that it was not possible to examine in any detail the longevity of values communicated within what Bruner (2005) terms post-tour narratives. Additionally, the nuances of how the individuality of tourists affect communication could only be hinted at, as the performances of gender, age, specialist knowledge and the context of the visit were only revealed if tourists made reference to these things specifically. For example, I interviewed several pairs of tourists who gave the outward appearance of being couples where stereotypical gender preferences towards industrial heritage were displayed. However, within the context of the questions I was asking, it was not possible to determine if this truly was a gendered response or one relating to the professional or personal experiences of the people being interviewed. The type of research carried out by Tucker (2005) and Bruner (2005) where they spent considerable amounts of time with individual groups of tourists allowed greater reflection on the nuances of individuals but my methods, which only allowed a short period of time with each visitor, can only hint at these possibilities.

A key limitation in my approach to interview sampling was that I could only speak to people who responded to my request to interview them. In a study of a larger area this might not

have such significant effects but in Ironbridge Gorge, where there are only a relatively small number of people involved in each area I was looking into, this did create some gaps. Taking the interviews I carried out with local business owners and staff as an example, my approach was to attempt to contact them initially by email or through their online contact forms. I also advertised that I was recruiting participants through local Facebook groups and pages. If I had no response I then followed up by going onto a premises in person to request an interview. However, I was limited by the evening opening hours and general busyness of some of the restaurants in being able to do this and also, in several cases, where people agreed in principle but did not reply to my requests to actually carry out the interview. I was satisfied that I had accumulated sufficient data through the interviews I was able to carry out, but of course I cannot know what might have come from interviews with people I was not able to recruit. One gap was with coach party operators. I identified six companies who carried out trips to Ironbridge Gorge and contacted all of them via email, contact forms and by telephone. However, I received no responses and calls were not returned and, without any contacts in that industry, was therefore unable to include this perspective.

There were a number of areas in this project where I carried out some research but was not able to explore in the detail that they could have warranted. These decisions were made on the basis of the existence of previous research into them, the nature of the questions I was seeking to answer and the need to limit the scope to work that could be accomplished within the time period of this project. However, these would have been interesting lines of enquiry and are worth highlighting here.

The first was that I focused more on the areas of Ironbridge Gorge WHS beyond the limits of the museum sites. This was partially as a result of previous work carried out within the

museums, both for market research and academic purposes (e.g. Beeho and Prentice, 1995; Goulding, 2000) and also to do with my desire to focus particularly on the Iron Bridge and Old Furnace as monuments within the WHS. I also considered that the enclavic nature of these spaces would exert more control on the performances of tourists within them and I particularly wanted to examine what tourists do in areas where there are fewer constraints on their behaviour. I did collect data on the interpretation offered across all of the IGMT museum sites and carried out interviews and observation at Blists Hill Victorian Town but there would certainly have been scope for more work within these spaces. Further, beyond collecting information about interpretation in Jackfield and Coalport, I largely excluded these parts of the WHS. This was done in recognition that they both experience less visitation from tourists and that they feature only as parts of the ensemble of industrial features across the site rather than as specific loci of World Heritage values. Blists Hill, Ironbridge, Benthall Edge and the Old Furnace in Coalbrookdale were chosen to act representatively for the whole WHS. An additional issue was that I could only observe tourists in any one part of the site at a time, an unavoidable restriction but one which would not have been present at a physically smaller site. Finally, I was only able to touch on the volume of potential digital materials created by tourists. I analysed reviews on Trip Advisor and images posted on Instagram across the year that I carried out the fieldwork. The sheer size of the available data online and the specialist techniques available for their analysis is something that is continuing to emerge. This kind of work is being approached by the rapidly emerging field of digital humanities and would have overwhelmed the scope of this study to do more than briefly touch upon it.

7.5.3 Future directions

Some of the more unexpected results of this research, namely the lack of emphasis on universal values and the issues of dissonance as a barrier to communication, would be an interesting area for more detailed research using longer form interviews or focus groups with members of the public. The nature of this project meant that interviews with tourists were often short but by addressing these specific issues in longer form interviews there would be potential to investigate them further. A complementary course for further research would be to study the effectiveness of universal values focused interpretation on tourist perceptions and engagements with WHSs, either through identifying case study sites where this approach is already used or by trialing an exhibition, event or other form of interpretation to test its effectiveness. Beyond these aspects it would be valuable to see further research carried out into the communication of World Heritage values to tourists at other WHSs and to compare these to non-designated but otherwise similar heritage sites. Through a broader range of case studies a deeper understanding of how tourists relate to WHSs could be formed which would be valuable information to feed in to the guidance provided to sites by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Another area for future work would be to examine further the engagement of people with industrial heritage in rural contexts which would provide an interesting counterpoint to the more commonly urban work that has been done to date (e.g. Edensor, 2005; Strangleman, 2013).

7.6 Conclusion

In concluding this thesis I have discussed the three most significant themes that have emerged from this research, namely the separation between the outstanding and the universal in the communication of values to tourists, the difficulties arising from the dissonance

between the historic significance of a place and its present day appearance, and who possesses the power and the responsibility to communicate World Heritage values. As a final reflection I would like to address the research questions which have been threaded throughout this discussion. The first of these looked at the nature of the World Heritage values of Ironbridge Gorge and the ways these are formally represented to tourists. The SOUV for the site identifies two individual monuments valued both as examples of the outstanding genius of humanity and for the intangible qualities of innovation and progress that they represent (UNESCO, no date-c). The wider landscape is also identified as having value as a whole, representing a "fascinating summary of the development of an industrial region in modern times" and as a symbol of the Industrial Revolution (UNESCO, no date-c, n.p.).

By analysing the interpretation available to tourists, through printed materials, online information, face to face interaction with interpreters and guides and through the museums within the site, it was clear that these values are included although rarely all within a single source. It was enlightening to examine the ways in which different organisations represented the values of the site and contrast them with how other narratives of the area were presented, revealing that the industrial story of the Gorge is often deliberately suppressed in order to promote aspects deemed more appealing. Despite the fact that the full picture of the site's OUV is potentially available, it was also clear that the sheer volume of information would make it impossible for any individual to encounter all of it, making the inconsistency in the way that the site's values are presented particularly significant. Further, the lack of interpretation available at the places most frequented by visitors, especially the Iron Bridge, exacerbates this and means that potentially hundreds of thousands of visitors may leave unaware of the breadth of interpretation offered to them.

The second research question focused on the experience of the site by visitors, exploring the range of tourist performances and the variation of these across the different areas of the site. The patterns of tourist behaviour observed in Ironbridge Gorge were fairly typical: wandering and window shopping, taking photographs, eating and drinking, and in some cases reading interpretative signage and visiting the museums. Of interest were the ways that some performances seemed to create greater intimacy with the structure or, conversely, reinforce distance. Walking over the Iron Bridge and peering into the mouth of the Old Furnace were seen to not only be characteristic of tourist performances at these monuments, but also things which encouraged reflection on the nature of the structure. However, other performances which might seem likely to communicate World Heritage values such as sign reading revealed little actual transference of information or connection, with many tourists admitting that they had not really read the signs, just taken a glance at them. This area of the project revealed that, despite the large quantity of information made available to tourists, communication is a much more difficult thing to achieve. It would be unrealistic and counter-productive to suggest that tourists be encouraged to act in particularly different ways so the next question, which looked at what tourists say about World Heritage values and their interaction with them is particularly useful in terms of considering how better to engage visitors.

Through interviews with tourists about what they considered to be important about the site, combined with analysis of Trip Advisor reviews and images posted on Instagram, I was able to examine what tourists valued about Ironbridge Gorge and their understandings of World Heritage. For a large number of people interviewed Ironbridge Gorge was primarily a place they enjoyed on the basis of its atmosphere, variously described in terms of being quaint, peaceful, scenic and historic. The importance of a sense of the past in perceptions of this

atmosphere was significant but rather non-specific, relating to broader imaginaries of Englishness and rurality rather than the Industrial Revolution. It was clear that there was widespread awareness of some of the 'outstanding' elements of Ironbridge Gorge's history, both as the location of the world's first iron bridge and as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. However, there was evidence that these ideas had rarely been considered by the visitors, who would repeat these phrases verbatim from the signage around them and, when questioned further, often knew very little more or even found themselves questioning their recollection.

The 'universal' aspects of the site's significance were virtually non-existent within the tourist narratives, with the closest thing to them being a belief in the importance of preserving the past. Interviews with tourism industry stakeholders and analysis of interpretative materials highlighted the difficulties in communicating the World Heritage values of a complex landscape with a history which, while undoubtedly significant, is not widely considered as interesting or attractive to tourists. The general absence of universal values was perhaps not overly surprising; it is conventional wisdom that tourists are primarily interested in the outstanding, but it reveals a potential opportunity for greater communication. Universal values are those aspects which, theoretically at least, have value to all humanity; tourists and tourism industry stakeholders alike. If the communication of outstanding values alone has not fostered significant communication of value then it is certainly an opportunity to explore what emphasising the universal might do.

Throughout this project the question that I have attempted to answer is what role do World Heritage values play in the construction of Ironbridge Gorge as a tourist destination. The nature of Ironbridge Gorge as a tourist destination is the work of many different individuals

and organisations, from B&B owners to marketing specialists to the tourists themselves. World Heritage values are, at once, completely inherent and also often largely irrelevant to the construction of the destination. Without the core story of Ironbridge Gorge as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution and the recognition of the significance of the evidence of the eighteenth century industries Ironbridge Gorge would never have become a tourist attraction. The conservation work which has led to the preservation of historic buildings, with all the character and uniqueness that creates a sense of place that tourists want to visit, is all derived from the things inscribed into the OUV. However, as has been discussed, the industrial nature of this story and these values are often seen as something which might be off-putting for potential tourists. Instead the more generalised qualities of the Gorge as a scenic landscape with a multitude of possible leisure pursuits have become more widely promoted over the OUV of the area.

Further, the universality of industry in our collective experience of the modern world is given little promotion and occurs rarely in tourist understandings of the value of the site. World Heritage status is frequently seen as something of a quality mark, prestige rather than something indicative of a greater story. When combined with the fact that tourism is fundamentally a leisure activity the World Heritage values are often little more than window-dressing in the construction of Ironbridge Gorge as a tourist destination. However, the construction of destinations is a constantly evolving thing and the stories of a place are dynamic. Ironbridge Gorge has changed dramatically over the last five decades and it will change again in the future. With ongoing conservation work approaching completion at the Iron Bridge at the time of writing and plans for substantial redevelopment of Coalbrookdale in the near future, there is plenty of room for hope. If tourism is integrated into the heart of

the management of the World Heritage Site, it is more than possible to bridge the gap between the site's Outstanding Universal Values and tourists' perceptions of them.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

To categorise the ways in which different aspects of Ironbridge Gorge's OUVs are presented to tourists six elements were identified within the SOUV which were numbered 1-6:

1. The importance of the Old Furnace
2. Evidence of humanity's creative genius
3. The importance of the preserved industrial landscape
4. The importance of the Iron Bridge
5. The educational significance of Ironbridge Gorge
6. Symbolic significance as the 'birthplace of industry'

Additionally, whether or not the World Heritage status of the site is mentioned was recorded.

Table of Material and Digital Culture through which World Heritage values are communicated

Creator	Name	Medium	Where	World Heritage Values						WHS Status
				#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Unclear	Telford Services	Sign	Telford Services		x		x		x	Y
Coracle Trust	Coracle Shed	Sign	Coracle Shed							N
Small Woods Association	Green Wood Centre	Sign	Small Woods Association						x	Y
SGCT	Welcome to Benthall Edge	Sign	Benthall Edge, near Bridge			x			x	N
SGCT	Restored Mine Tubs from Granville Pit Telford	Sign	Benthall Edge, picnic site			x				N
SGCT	Welcome to Bower Yard	Sign	Benthall Edge, picnic site			x	x			
SGCT	A Glimpse into the Workings of a Lime Kiln	Sign	Bower Yard Lime Kiln			x				N
SGCT	Benthall Edge Limsetone	Sign	Bower Yard Lime Kiln			x				N
Multiple	Ironbridge Gorge WHS: Bedlam Furnaces	Sign	Severn Valley Way, opposite Bedlam Furnaces		x	x				Y
SGCT	The Cottage Garden	Sign	Sabbath Walks, Dale Coppice							N
SGCT	The Doric Temple	Sign	Sabbath Walks, Dale Coppice			x				N
SGCT	Sculpture on Church Road	Printed information, laminated	Sabbath Walks, Lincoln Hill							N
SGCT	The Rotunda	Sign	Sabbath Walks, Lincoln Hill				x			N
SGCT	Spectuacular Views of the Ironbrdige Gorge from the Rotunda	Sign	Dale End Car Park							N
Unclear	Bicentenary Plaque	Plaque	Iron Bridge				x			N
Unclear	WHS plaque	Plaque	Iron Bridge				x			Y
American Civil Engineering Assoc	International Historic Civil Eng Landmark	Plaque	Iron Bridge				x			N
English Heritage	The Iron Bridge	Sign	Iron Bridge		x		x			Y
Aga/Rayburn	Coalbrookdale Foundry	Sign	Aga Factory		x					N
Tontine Hotel	Tontine Hotel	Sign	Tontine Hotel		x		x			N
Multiple	Ironbridge Gorge WHS: Market Square	Sign	Market Square				x			Y
T&W Council	South Telford Way	Sign	Station Yard Car Park							N
Multiple	Ironbridge Gorge WHS: Coalport and Maws Tile Works	Sign	Jackfield (behind Boar Inn)			x				Y

Creator	Name	Medium	Where	World Heritage Values						WHS Status
				#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Multiple	Ironbridge Gorge WHS: Old Station Yard	Sign	Station Yard Car Park			x				Y
IGMT	Welcome to the Iron Bridge Tollhouse	Sign	Iron Bridge				x		x	N
IGMT	Welcome to Ironbridge	Sign	Iron Bridge			x	x		x	Y
IGMT	Welcome to Ironbridge	Sign	Iron Bridge	x					x	Y
T&W Council	Dale End Park	Sign	Dale End Car Park			x				N
IGMT	Welcome to the Museum of the Gorge	Sign	Museum of the Gorge				x		x	N
IGMT	Welcome to the Museum of the Gorge	Sign	Museum of the Gorge							Y
IGMT	Bedlam Furnaces	Sign	Bedlam Furnaces			x	x		x	N
IGMT	Welcome to Bedlam Furnaces	Sign	Bedlam Furnaces				x	x		N
IGMT	Welcome to Bedlam Furnaces	Sign	Bedlam Furnaces			x				Y
IGMT	The Coalport Section of the Shropshire Canal	Sign	Coalport Museum			x				N
IGMT	Welcome to Coalport	Sign	Coalport Museum			x	x			N
IGMT	Welcome to Coalport	Sign	Coalport Museum			x				Y
Shropshire CC	Original Free Bridge	Plaque	Jackfield Bridge							N
T&W Council	Lloyds Head	Sign	Lloyds, Jackfield Side			x				N
T&W Council	Lloyds Phase 1 and 2 (Coalport Road)	Sign	Lloyds, Coalport Side			x				N
T&W Council	Jackfield. Stabilising a Landslide	Sign	Nr Maws Craft Centre			x				N
T&W Council	Jackfield. Stabilising a Landslide… Mining Legacy	Sign	Stabilisation area, hillside			x				N
T&W Council	Jackfield. Stabilising a Landslide… Land Movement	Sign	Stabilisation area, near river			x				N
T&W Council	Jackfield. Stabilising a Landslide…the solution	Sign	Stabilisation area, near river			x				Y
T&W Council	Rock Revetment	Sign	Stabilisation area, Boiler shells			x				N
St Marys Church, Jackfield	St Mary the Virgin	Information board	St Marys Church, Jackfield			x				N
Bird in the Hand Pub	Bird in the Hand	Painted sign	On pub wall				x			N
Multiple	Ironbridge Gorge WHS Blists Hill Vic Town	Sign	Blists Hill car park							Y
IGMT	Welcome to Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron	Sign	Museum of Iron	x			x		x	N
IGMT	Welcome to Enginuity	Sign	Enginuity				x			N
Multiple	Ironbridge Gorge WHS Museum of Iron	Sign	Museum of Iron							Y
IGMT	The Old Furnace - The Upper Works	Sign	Old Furnace	x	x	x			x	N
T&W Council	Watercourses - The Old Furnace	Sign	Old Furnace	x		x				N

Creator	Name	Medium	Where	World Heritage Values						WHS Status
				#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
IGMT	The Old Furnace - Water Wheels and Grinding Stones	Sign	Old Furnace	x		x				N
IGMT	The Old Furnace - the power of water	Sign	Old Furnace	x		x				N
IGMT	Shifting Worlds	Sign	Old Furnace	x	x				x	N
Unclear	Old Furnace plaque	Plaque	Old Furnace	x						N
IGMT	The Old Furnace	Sign	Old Furnace	x	x				x	N
IGMT	The Old Furnace (the history of the furnace…)	Sign	Old Furnace	x	x	x				N
IGMT	The Old Furnace - charging ramp	Sign	Old Furnace	x						N
IGMT	The Waterwheel	Sign	Old Furnace	x		x				N
IGMT	The Bellows	Sign	Old Furnace	x						N
IGMT	Hot Chemistry	Sign	Old Furnace	x			x		x	N
IGMT	International Iron and Steel Inst	Plaque	Old Furnace							N
IGMT	The Charging Ramp	Sign	Old Furnace	x			x			N
IGMT	The Snapper Furnace	Sign	Old Furnace	x		x	x		x	N
T&W Council	Watercourses - Explore Coalbrookdales'…	Sign	Museum of the Gorge			x				N
T&W Council	Watercourses - Boring Mill Pool	Sign	Boring Mill	x		x				N
T&W Council	Watercourses Upper Forge Sluices	Sign	Opposite Boring Mill			x				N
T&W Council	Watercourses New Pool	Sign	New Pool (up past Dale Coppice)			x				N
T&W Council	Woodside orchard closure	Sign	Community Orchard			x				N
SGCT	Welcome to Woodside Community Orchard	Sign	Community Orchard							N
T&W Council	Watercourses - the Coke Hearths	Sign	Junction at School Lane	x	x	x				N
T&W Council	Watercourses - Explore Coalbrookdales'…	Sign	Upper Forge Pool			x				N
T&W Council	Watercourses Loamhole Dingle	Sign	Loamhole Dingle start (nr Viaduct)			x				N
T&W Council	Watercourses Dale House Bridge	Sign	Dale House			x				N
T&W Council	Watercourses Loamhole Brook Steps	Sign	Loamhole Dingle steps							N
SGCT	Ropewalk - History under your feet	Sign	Ropewalk	x		x				N
T&W Council	Watercourses the Ropewalk	Sign	Ropewalk			x				N
IGMT	Quaker Burial Ground	Sign	Quaker Burial Ground				x			N
SGCT	Loamhole Dingle	Sign	Loamhole Dingle start (nr Viaduct)			x				N
T&W Council	Watercourses The Upper Furnace Pool	Sign	Upper Forge Pool	x		x				N

Creator	Name	Medium	Where	World Heritage Values						WHS Status
				#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Madeley Council	Madeley's Heritage	Sign	Madeley town centre			x				N
IGMT	Welcome to the Tar Tunnel	Sign	Tar Tunnel			x	x			N
IGMT	Tar Tunnel	Sign	Tar Tunnel			x				Y
SGCT	Lloyds Coppice - an ever changing landscape	Sign	Lloyds Coppice			x				N
SGCT	Lloyds Coppice Ironbridge	Sign	Lloyds Coppice			x				N
IGMT	YHA Coalport	Sign	Yha Coalport			x				Y
IGMT	Jackfield Tile Museum	Sign	Tile Museum			x	x			N
IGMT	Jackfield Tile Museum	Sign	Tile Museum							Y
IGMT	Welcome to Blists Hill	Sign	Blists Hill (entrance)				x			N
IGMT	Welcome to Blists Hill	Sign	Blists Hill (after audio-visual)			x				N
IGMT	The Shropshire Canal	Sign	Blists Hill			x				N
IGMT	The Hay Inclined Plane	Sign	Blists Hill			x				N
IGMT	Blists Hill Brick & Tile Works	Sign	Blists Hill			x				N
IGMT	Blast from the North	Sign	Blast Furnaces Blists Hill			x				N
IGMT	Blists Hill Blast Furnaces	Sign	Blast Furnaces Blists Hill			x				N
IGMT	The Wrought Ironworks	Sign	Blists Hill							N
IGMT	Clay Mining	Sign	Blists Hill			x				N
IGMT	The Blists Hill Mine	Sign	Blists Hill			x				N
IGMT	People and Clay	Sign	Blists Hill			x				N
IGMT	Clay Getting and Mining Methods	Sign	Blists Hill			x				N
IGMT	Clay mining in Coalbrookdale	Sign	Blists Hill			x				N
IGMT	Underground Riches	Sign	Blists Hill			x				N
IGMT	Blast from the South	Sign	Blast Furnaces Blists Hill			x				N
IGMT	The Maintenance Department	Sign	Blast Furnaces Blists Hill			x				N
IGMT	Restoring the Pit Head Frame Gear	Sign	Blists Hill			x				N
IGMT	In 1802 the Coalbrookdlae Company…	Sign	Blists Hill						x	N
IGMT	The Caolbrookdale Locomotive	Sign	Blists Hill						x	N
Maws Craft Centre	Maw & Co Tiles	Sign	Maws Craft Centre			x				N
Maws Craft Centre	Maw & Company	Sign	Maws Craft Centre			x	x			N
Maws Craft Centre	Maws Craft Centre	Sign	Maws Craft Centre			x				N
Maws Craft Centre	Maws Craft Centre	Website	Online				x			Y
Shropshire Raft Tours	Shropshire Raft Tours	Website	Online						x	N

Creator	Name	Medium	Where	World Heritage Values						WHS Status
				#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Green Wood Café	Green Wood Café	Website	Online							N
Small Woods Association	Small Woods Association	Website	Online							Y
Merrythought Village	Merrythought Village	Website	Online				x			Y
Bicycles by Design	Bicycles by Design	Website	Online				x			N
Abode at Number Five	Abode	Website	Online							N
Darbys 1779	Darbys 1779	Website	Online				x			N
Eley's of Ironbridge	Eley's of Ironbridge	Website	Online				x		x	N
Bears on the Square	Bears on the Square	Website	Online							Y
Moonshine and Fuggles	Moonshine and Fuggles	Website	Online							Y
D'arcys	D'arcys Restaurant	Website	Online				x			N
Grays of Shropshire	Grays of Shropshire	Website	Online				x			Y
White Hart	White Hart	Website	Online				x			N
Coracle Trust	Coracle Trust	Website	Online	x			x			Y
English Heritage	English Heritage	Website	Online		x	x	x	x	x	Y
Walking Festival	Ironbridge Walking Festival	Website	Online		x	x	x		x	Y
Telford Harriers	Iron Bridge Half Marathon	Website	Online				x			N
T&W Council	Discover Telford	Website	Online			x	x		x	Y
IGMT	Ironbridge Museums	Website	Online	x	x	x	x	x	x	Y
National Trust	Benthall Hall	Website	Online			x	x			Y
English Heritage	Buildwas Abbey	Website	Online				x			N
Days out with the kids	Days out with the kids	Website	Online							N
Virtual Shropshire	Ironbrdige Guide	Website	Online	x	x	x	x		x	Y
Wikipedia	Ironbridge Wikipedia	Website	Online		x	x	x	x	x	Y
Lonely Planet	Ironbridge Gorge - Lonely Planet	Website	Online		x		x		x	Y
SGCT	Severn Gorge Countryside Trust	Website	Online		x	x	x	x	x	Y
Shropshire Tourism	Shropshire Tourism	Website	Online	x	x	x	x	x	x	Y
Shropshire for Groups	Shropshire for Groups	Website	Online	x	x	x	x	x	x	Y
Shropshire Tourism	Ironbridge (Love from Shropshire)	Website	Online	x	x	x	x		x	Y
World Heritage Centre	Ironbridge Gorge - WHC	Website	Online	x	x	x	x	x	x	Y
Sykes Cottages	The Lookout	Website	Online				x		x	N
Sykes Cottages	Valley Cottage, Jackfield	Website	Online				x			Y
Sykes Cottages	Brook Cottage, Coalbrookdale	Website	Online	x			x			Y

Creator	Name	Medium	Where	World Heritage Values						WHS Status
				#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Sykes Cottages	Sleepy Hollow, Jackfield	Website	Online				x			Y
Eley's of Ironbridge	Eley's of Ironbridge Cottages	Website	Online				x		x	N
Booking	Firs Riverside B&B	Website	Online							Y
Booking	Calcutts House	Website	Online						x	N
Property website	Calcutts House	Website	Online			x			x	N
Booking	Meadow Inn and Steakhouse	Website	Online							Y
Booking	The Swan Taphouse	Website	Online				x			N
Booking	Springhill B&B	Website	Online				x			Y
Booking	Best Western Hotel	Website	Online				x			Y
Property website	Best Western Hotel	Website	Online				x	x	x	Y
Booking	The Malthouse	Website	Online				x			N
Property website	The Malthouse	Website	Online							N
Booking	Ladywood House B&B	Website	Online				x			Y
Property website	Ladywood House B&B	Website	Online		x	x	x		x	N
Booking	The Tontine	Website	Online							Y
Property website	The Tontine Hotel	Website	Online				x			N
Booking	Foundry Masters House	Website	Online			x	x			N
Property website	Foundry Masters House	Website	Online	x	x	x	x			Y
AirBnB	Foundry Masters House	Website	Online			x	x			Y
Booking	White Hart Inn	Website	Online							N
Property website	White Hart Inn	Website	Online				x			
Booking	Bridge View Guesthouse	Website	Online				x			N
Property website	Bridge View Guesthouse	Website	Online			x	x			N
Booking	The Old Rectory	Website	Online							N
Property website	The Old Rectory	Website	Online							N
Booking	Dale End Holiday Home	Website	Online				x			N
Booking	The Elizabethan	Website	Online							N
Booking	Riverbank Cottage	Website	Online				x			N
Booking	The Coracles	Website	Online							N
Booking	Garden Apartment	Website	Online				x			N
Booking	The Telford Whitehouse Hotel	Website	Online							N
Property website	The Telford Whitehouse Hotel	Website	Online						x	Y
Booking	Days In Hotel Telford, Ironbridge	Website	Online							N

Creator	Name	Medium	Where	World Heritage Values						WHS Status
				#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Property website	Days In Hotel Telford, Ironbridge	Website	Online							N
Booking	Ramada Telford Ironbridge	Website	Online							N
Property website	Ramada Telford Ironbridge	Website	Online						x	Y
Booking	International Hotel Telford	Website	Online							N
Property website	International Hotel Telford	Website	Online						x	Y
Booking	Hartfield Guest House	Website	Online							N
Booking	The Anvil Lodge	Website	Online							N
Booking	YHA Ironbridge Coalport	Website	Online			x	x			Y
YHA	YHA Ironbridge Coalport	Website	Online			x	x			Y
Booking	The Huntsman of Little Wenlock	Website	Online							N
Booking	Mercure Telford Madeley court hotel	Website	Online							N
Property website	Mercure Telford Madeley court hotel	Website	Online							N
Booking	The stagnate B7B	Website	Online				x			N
Booking	Holiday Inn Telford Ironbridge	Website	Online							N
Booking	Holiday Inn Telford Ironbridge	Website	Online						x	Y
Booking	Telford Hotel & Golf Resort	Website	Online							N
Property website	Telford Hotel & Golf Resort	Website	Online				x			Y
Booking	Cock Hotel	Website	Online							Y
Booking	Hundred House Htoel	Website	Online				x			N
YHA	YHA Coalbrookdlae	Website	Online	x	x	x	x		x	Y
Property website	IronGorge Camping	Website	Online				x			Y
Property website	Ironbridge Lodge	Website	Online	x	x	x	x		x	Y
AirBnB	Carpenters Row	Website	Online							N
AirBnB	Luxury Ensuite Double room	Website	Online							N
AirBnB	Cosy Designer Room in Ironbridge	Website	Online							N
AirBnB	Luxury Ensuite Double Room and Views	Website	Online				x			Y
AirBnB	Beautiful cottage with parking	Website	Online				x			Y
AirBnB	Martha’s Cottage	Website	Online				x			N
AirBnB	Fabulous Spot in Ironbridge	Website	Online				x		x	N
AirBnB	Amazing Ironbridge view B&B and parking	Website	Online				x			N
AirBnB	Self catering cottage, apartment	Website	Online							Y
AirBnB	Beautiful cottage with modern facilities	Website	Online				x		x	Y

Creator	Name	Medium	Where	World Heritage Values						WHS Status
				#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
AirBnB	Ironbridge townhouse GII listed 3 storey - Rooms x4	Website	Online				x			N
AirBnB	Ironbrdige Cottage Getaway	Website	Online							N
AirBnB	Beautiful Church and Valley Views B&B	Website	Online				x			N
AirBnB	Self catering studio apartment	Website	Online							Y
AirBnB	Georgian House in Ironbridge Gorge	Website	Online				x			N
AirBnB	Annex at the Barn	Website	Online							Y
AirBnB	Lovely Room in 16th C House	Website	Online				x			Y
AirBnB	Telford Corporate/short term let	Website	Online							N
IGMT	Hayman and Horton Ironbridge History and Guide	Guidebook	IGMT shops	x	x	x	x		x	N
Amberley Publishing	Powell, Ironbridge Gorge Through Time	Guidebook	IGMT shops	x	x	x	x		x	Y
Bradt	Kreft, Slow Travel: Shropshire	Guidebook	IGMT shops	x	x	x	x		x	Y
IGMT	Ceramics of the Ironbridge Gorge	Guidebook	IGMT shops			x	x		x	Y
IGMT	Coalbrookdale Birthplace of Industry	Guidebook	IGMT shops	x	x	x	x	x	x	Y
IGMT	The Iron Bridge and Town	Guidebook	IGMT shops	x	x	x	x		x	Y
IGMT	Broseley Pipeworks Clay Tobacco Pipe Museum	Guidebook	IGMT shops			x				N
IGMT	A Guide to Shropshire's Churches	Guidebook	IGMT shops			x	x			N
Gorge Parish	Nature Walks in the Gorge Parish	Guidebook	VIC			x	x			Y
SGCT	Pooley Coalbrookdale 3 Historic Walks	Guidebook	Greenwood Café	x	x	x	x			Y
SGCT	Pooley Bethall Edge 5 Historic Walks	Guidebook	Greenwood Café		x	x				Y
SGCT	Pooley Jackfield &Coalport 5 Historic Walks	Guidebook	Greenwood Café			x				Y
IGMT	Blists Hill Victorian Town Souvenir Guidebook	Guidebook	IGMT shops		x	x		x	x	Y
IGMT	IGMT Passport Ticket	Ticket	IGMT shops		x	x	x		x	Y
IGMT	The Darby Houses Rosehill and Dale House	Printed information (50p to buy)	Darby Houses	x		x	x			N
IGMT	Blists Hill Map	Leaflet	Blists Hill			x				N
Darbys 1779	Darbys 1779	Leaflet	Darbys 1779				x			N
WW2 wkd organisers	WWII weekend	Leaflet	VIC				x			Y
Walking Festival	Ironbrdige Gorge Walking Festival postcard	Leaflet	VIC				x			N
IGMT	Ironbridge Group Visits 2016 brochure	Leaflet	VIC	x	x	x	x	x	x	Y
IGMT	IGMT paper bags	Souvenir Shopping	IGMT shops							Y

Creator	Name	Medium	Where	World Heritage Values						WHS Status
				#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
IGMT	The Coalbrookdale Trail	Leaflet	Museum of Iron	x		x				N
T&W Council	The Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site Map	Leaflet	VIC			x	x	x	x	Y
SGCT	Exploring Ironbridge Gorge	Leaflet	Multiple - Station Yard and VIC	x	x	x	x		x	Y
Walking Festival	Ironbridge Gorge Walking Festival	Leaflet	Multiple - Station Yard and VIC			x	x			Y
SGCT	Loamhole Dingle History Under Your Feet	Leaflet	VIC	x		x				Y
SGCT	The Sabbath Walks Trail	Leaflet	VIC			x	x			Y
SGCT	The Lime Trail of Benthall Edge	Leaflet	Multiple - Station Yard and VIC			x				Y
SGCT	Ironbridge to Blists Hill Victorian Town	Leaflet	Multiple - Station Yard and VIC			x	x			Y
SGCT	The Iron Trail	Leaflet	Multiple - Station Yard and VIC	x	x	x	x		x	Y
Green Wood Centre	The Rotunda &Dale Coppice	Leaflet	Greenwood Café			x	x			N
Green Wood Centre	Strethill Walk	Leaflet	Greenwood Café	x		x				N
T&W Council	Cycling Map of Telford & Wrekin	Leaflet	VIC			x	x			Y
T&W Council	Visitor Map Ironbridge and Telford	Leaflet	Multiple - cafes, museums and VIC	x		x	x			Y
Shropshire CC	Mercian Way 2& 3	Leaflet	VIC			x	x		x	Y
IGMT	Ironbridge Inspiring Inventive Industiral	Leaflet	Everywhere			x	x		x	Y
Shropshire Raft Tours	Shropshire Raft Tours	Leaflet	Darbys 1779				x			N
Maws Craft Centre	The Maws Craft Centre	Leaflet	Maws							N
IGMT	Ironbridge Museums Free Map	Leaflet	IGMT shops	x		x	x			N
IGMT	Ironbridge Museums Inc Blists Hill 2016/2017	Leaflet	Everywhere	x	x	x	x		x	Y
IGMT	Whats On Ironbridge 2016	Leaflet	IGMT shops						x	Y
IGMT	Ironbridge 2016/17 Walk the beat…	Leaflet	Everywhere	x	x	x	x		x	Y
Ian Bridge Ballooning	Let's go flying	Leaflet	VIC				x			N
Premier Attractions	Premier Attractions: Discover the many attractions in Wales &The Midlands 2017	Leaflet	VIC						x	Y
IGMT	Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Steam Road Race	Leaflet	VIC				x			Y
T&W Council	World Heritage River Festival	Leaflet	Around the Gorge				x			Y
T&W Council	Jackfield Trail	Leaflet	Jackfield Tile Museum/VIC			x				N

Creator	Name	Medium	Where	World Heritage Values						WHS Status
				#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Niantic	Pokemon Go	App	Online			x	x			Y
Geocaching	Geocaching	App	Online			x	x			Y
IGMT	Ironbridge App	App	Online	x	x	x	x			Y
Channel 4	Rivers with Jeremy Paxman	TV	Channel 4		x	x	x		x	Y
BBC	The One Show	TV	BBC One		x		x		x	Y
ITV	ITV News	TV	ITV				x		x	N
BBC	Escape to the Country - Shropshire	TV	BBC One		x		x		x	N
BBC	DIY SOS 22.6.17	TV	BBC One				x			N
IGMT	The Museum of Iron	Museum	Museum of Iron	x	x	x	x		x	Y
IGMT	Enginuity	Museum	Enginuity		x	x	x		x	N
IGMT	The Darby Houses	Museum	The Darby Houses	x	x	x	x		x	N
IGMT	The Tollhouse	Museum	Iron Bridge	x	x	x	x		x	Y
IGMT	Blists Hill	Museum	Blists Hill	x	x	x	x		x	Y
IGMT	Coalport China Museum	Museum	Coalport Museum		x	x				N
IGMT	Jackfield Tile Museum	Museum	Jackfield Tile Museum			x				N
IGMT	Museum of the Gorge	Museum	Museum of the Gorge	x	x	x	x	x	x	Y
IGMT	Tar Tunnel	Museum	Tar Tunnel			x				Y
Birmingham Mail	5.12.16 Blists Hill Victorian Christmas: All you need to know	Newspaper	Online							N
Daily Mail	26.11.16 For Queen and Cuddles: Meet the savvy sisters who brought Britain's last surviving teddy-bear factory back from the brink	Newspaper	Online			x	x		x	N
Daily Telegraph	27.10.2016 Is this Britain’s most romantic (and affordable) retreat?	Newspaper	Online				x			Y
Daily Telegraph	21.10.2016 The 40 Best family days out for October half term	Newspaper	Online				x			N
Express and Star	13.2.17 Top places to take the kids this half-term in the Midlands and Shropshire	Newspaper	Online				x			N
Mirror	12.10.2016 Experience Britain’s amazing past with these top 10 living history breaks	Newspaper	Online				x		x	Y
Mirror	20.12.2016 The Shropshire Thrills: Beautiful Walks, fantastic food and lovely pubs in a county for all seasons	Newspaper	Online				x			N

Creator	Name	Medium	Where	World Heritage Values						WHS Status
				#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Cycling Weekly	29.3.17 New Ironbridge bikes are designed and built in the UK of British steel	Newspaper	Online				x			N
Guardian	18.4.17 What is the midlands engine and what will it do for the region	Newspaper	Online							Y
Guardian	30.11.2016 Cold Weather in England and Wales set to continue	Newspaper	Online				x			N
Wrekin News	12.4.17 Plan for World Heritage Site set for submission to UNESCO	Newspaper	Online				x		x	Y
Shropshire Live	3.10.16 Zombies invade Blists Hill Victorian Town	Newspaper	Online							N
Shropshire Live	12.10.16 Halloween events in Shropshire during October 2016 half-term	Newspaper	Online							N
Shropshire Live	13.10.16 Major emergency exercise to test volunteers' disaster response	Newspaper	Online				x			N
Shropshire Live	8.11.16 Gorgeous crafts to go on show at Enginuity	Newspaper	Online							N
Shropshire Live	11.11.16 Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust purchase Northumberland Vase at Auction	Newspaper	Online			x				N
Shropshire Live	23.11.16 Experience the magic of a Victorian Christmas at Blists Hill Victorian Town	Newspaper	Online							N
Shropshire Live	26.1.17 Blists Hill Victorian Town to host First Music Hall Evening	Newspaper	Online							N
Shropshire Live	3.2.17 Walkers set for 12th annual Ironbridge Gorge walking festival	Newspaper	Online				x			N
Shropshire Live	15.2.17 February 2017 Half Term Holiday events in Shropshire	Newspaper	Online							N
Shropshire Live	16.2.17 Blists Hill Victorian Town receives top Gold VisitEngland Accolade	Newspaper	Online							N
Shropshire Live	20.2.17 50 people to flip pancakes on the Iron Bridge	Newspaper	Online				x		x	N
Shropshire Live	27.2.17 Shropshire Hotel wins top rated award	Newspaper	Online							N
Shropshire Live	13.3.17 Historic steam machines to take part in road run through the Ironbridge Gorge	Newspaper	Online							Y

Creator	Name	Medium	Where	World Heritage Values						WHS Status
				#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Shropshire Live	18.4.17 Ironbridge Bicyles win prestigious Cyclist Magazine Choice Award	Newspaper	Online				x			N
Shropshire Live	18.4.17 Ironbridge Gorge Museums mark World Heritage Day	Newspaper	Online		x	x	x		x	Y
Shropshire Star	25.4.17 St George's Day 2017: Horse-back riders make their way into Ironbridge	Newspaper	Online					x		Y
Shropshire Star	24.4.17 Ironbridge Gorge protection plan is approved	Newspaper	Online						x	Y
Shropshire Star	18.4.17 Ironbridge Museums at 50: Archive is gorge's real hidden treasure	Newspaper	Online	x	x	x	x	x	x	N
Shropshire Star	21.4.17 Ironbridge museums at 50: Duck race that nearly quaked the Iron Bridge	Newspaper	Online				x			N
Shropshire Star	18.4.17 Ironbrdige museums at 50: Star Players behind those golden years	Newspaper	Online	x					x	Y
Shropshire Star	17.4.17 Ironbridge Museums at 50: From 'fit for scrap' to bridge of pure gold	Newspaper	Online	x	x	x	x	x	x	Y
Shropshire Star	12.4.17 Heritage and history of Ironbridge Gorge at centre of council discussions	Newspaper	Online				x		x	Y
Shropshire Star	7.4.17 Busy year as Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust marks its 50th anniversary - pictures and video	Newspaper	Online	x		x	x	x	x	Y
Shropshire Star	20.4.17 Blists Hill: Past illustrated with salvaged buildings	Newspaper	Online			x	x			
Shropshire Star	30.3.17 Iron museum reopens as mark of anniversary celebrations	Newspaper	Online				x		x	Y
Shropshire Star	1.3.17 Pancake race at Iron Bridge - with video	Newspaper	Online				x		x	N
Shropshire Star	11.1.17 £1.25 million renovation work on Iron Bridge to be delayed until the spring	Newspaper	Online		x		x		x	Y
Shropshire Star	14.3.17 Vintage car rally coming to Iron Bridge	Newspaper	Online							Y
Shropshire Star	17.3.17 1940s event heading to Ironbridge this weekend	Newspaper	Online							Y
Shropshire Star	6.2.17 Ironbridge Gorge Walking Festival	Newspaper	Online				x			N
Shropshire Star	4.1.17 1940s style event planned for Ironbridge Gorge	Newspaper	Online				x			Y

Creator	Name	Medium	Where	World Heritage Values						WHS Status
				#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Shropshire Star	13.10.16 Ironbrdige Goreg disaster training exercise taking place this weekend	Newspaper	Online				x			N
Shropshire Star	17.10.16 Emergency! Teams gather for Ironbridge Gorge 'disaster'	Newspaper	Online			x	x			N
Shropshire Star	23.2.17 Ironbridge Gorge Museums marks 50 years since founding	Newspaper	Online							N
Shropshire Star	22.3.17 £15m boost for Ironbridge Gorge Museums to be revealed	Newspaper	Online	x		x			x	N
Shropshire Star	15.10.16 Emergency teams respond to Ironbrdige Gorge 'catastrophe'	Newspaper	Online							N
Shropshire Star	5.12.16 Iconic bridge bathed in colour at Ironbridge Christmas Lights Switch on	Newspaper	Online				x			N
Shropshire Star	17.2.17 Music hall evenings held as part of Ironbridge Gorge Museums' anniversary clebrations	Newspaper	Online							N
Shropshire Star	22.10.16 Ironbridge's worldwide reputation could benefit whole of Shropshire	Newspaper	Online							Y
Shropshire Star	18.2.17 Annual Ironbridge Gorge walking festival returns	Newspaper	Online				x			N
Shropshire Star	27.2.17 Young scientists in Shropshire build their own rockets at Ironbridge Gorge Museums	Newspaper	Online							N
Shropshire Star	13.2.17 Top places to take the kids this half-term in the Midlands and Shropshire	Newspaper	Online				x			N
Shropshire Star	22.1.17 Deserted Shropshire mill on the market for £400,000	Newspaper	Online			x				Y
Shropshire Star	27.10.16 Fish not seen in Shropshire for 100 years could return to River Severn	Newspaper	Online				x			N
Shropshire Star	28.2.17 Jeremy Paxman celebrating the River Severn for new channel 4 series	Newspaper	Online							N
Waitrose	27.4.17 Waitrose Weekend, Events, Ironbridge Gorge Walking Festival	Newspaper	Newspaper (in stores)							N
BBC	20.5.17 Rescue bid at Ironbride's Bedlam Furnaces	Newspaper	Online			x			x	N

Creator	Name	Medium	Where	World Heritage Values						WHS Status
				#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Shropshire Star	18.5.17 Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust awarded £1million to preserve key monuments	Newspaper	Online	x	x	x			x	N
Shropshire Star	16.5.17 Telford chapel to be transformed into wellbeing studio	Newspaper	Online							Y
Shropshire Star	25.5.17 Aga Coalbrookdale foundry closure: Dismay and disbelief as firm pulls the plug	Newspaper	Online	x	x		x		x	Y
Shropshire Star	24.5.17 Work still needs to be done to stabilise Ironbridge Gorge, says council	Newspaper	Online							Y
Shropshire Star	24.5.17 Aga Rangemaster to close Coalbrookdale foundry	Newspaper	Online						x	N
Daily Telegraph	10.8.17 Children of the Revolution: How to Visit Ironbridge Gorge	Newspaper	Online	x	x	x	x	x	x	N
Buzzlines	Scenes of Shropshire, Ironbridge & Welsh Borders	Coach Trip Itinerary	Online				x			Y
Grand UK Holidays	Scenic Shropshire & Ironbridge Gorge	Coach Trip Itinerary	Online				x		x	N
National Holidays	Ironbridge Gorge & Severn Valley Steam	Coach Trip Itinerary	Online		x	x	x	x	x	Y
Newmarket Holidays	Newmarket: Ludlow, Shrewsbury & Secrets of Shropshire Tour	Coach Trip Itinerary	Online				x		x	N
Sunrise Direct	Ironbridge Gorge & the ‘River in the Sky'	Coach Trip Itinerary	Online				x		x	N
Shropshire Raft Tours	Shropshire Raft Tours	Boat trip	Boat trip		x	x	x			Y

APPENDIX B

Table of Participant and Non-Participant Observation carried out

Type	Place or Event	Date(s)
Non-participant	Iron Bridge	27.10.16-29.10.16
Participant	Blists Hill Fireworks	5.11.16
Participant	Souvenir shopping, Ironbridge	21.11.16
Non-participant	Iron Bridge	18.2.17-24.2.17
Non-participant	Ironbridge Half-Marathon	12.3.17
Participant	SGCT Art Day	24.3.17
Participant	Industrial Archaeology Day	8.4.17
Non-participant	Blists Hill	17.4.17
Participant	Ironbridge Gorge Walking Festival	29.4.17-5.5.17
Participant	Raft Trip along the River Severn	1.5.17
Non-participant	Iron Bridge	1.5.17
Non-participant	Ironbridge Gorge Steam Road Rally	13.5.17
Non-participant	Ironbridge Gorge WW2 Weekend	27.5.17
Non-participant	Iron Bridge	7.6.17
Non-participant	Iron Bridge	17.6.17
Non-participant	Old Furnace	23.6.17
Non-participant	Iron Bridge	1.7.17
Non-participant	Old Furnace	10.7.17
Non-participant	Old Furnace	15.7.17
Non-participant	Blists Hill	27.7.17-29.7.17
Non-participant	Old Furnace	1.8.17-8.8.17
Non-participant	Blists Hill	9.8.17-10.8.17
Non-participant	Iron Bridge	10.8.17-12.8.17
Non-participant	Old Furnace	18.8.17-17.8.17

APPENDIX C

Table of Interviews Carried Out

	Details	Location	Length (minutes)	Date
1	Interview with Richard Bifield (former Head of Tourism, Telford & Wrekin Council)	Café	60	23.5.16
2	Interview with Simon McCloy, CEO Shropshire Tourism	By email	NA	4.11.16
3	Interview with Russell Rowley, Manager Severn Gorge Countryside Trust	Participant's workplace	60	14.11.16
4	Interview with Paul Gossage, Head of Marketing, IGMT	Participant's workplace	60	8.12.16
5	Interview with Marie Kreft, travel writer	By email	NA	11.1.17
6	Interview with local steam railway representative	Participant's workplace	30	11.1.17
7	Interview with raft tour representative	By phone	15	13.1.17
8	Interview with B&B owner	By email	NA	13.1.17
9	Interview with Angling Society representative	By phone	10	16.1.17
10	Interview with Rory Hunter, Commercial Manager, IGMT	By phone	30	16.1.17
11	Interview with B&B owner	By email	NA	16.1.17

	Details	Location	Length (minutes)	Date
12	Interview with café owner	Participant's workplace	20	20.1.17
13	Interview with bar manager	Participant's workplace	20	20.1.17
14	Interview with shop owner	Participant's workplace	10	20.1.17
15	Interview with shop staff	Participant's workplace	10	20.1.17
16	Interview with shop owner	Participant's workplace	10	20.1.17
17	Interview with hot air balloon operator	By phone	10	23.1.17
18	Interview with local artist and gallery owner	Participant's workplace	20	25.1.17
19	Interview with hotel manager	Participant's workplace	30	27.1.17
20	Interview with hotel manager	Participant's workplace	30	27.1.17
21	Interview with bar owner	Participant's workplace	20	27.1.17
22	Interview with restaurant owner	Participant's workplace	20	27.1.17
23	Interview with Small Woods Association representative	Participant's workplace	30	27.1.18
24	Interview with walking festival co-ordinator	Café	30	1.2.17
25	Interview with café owner	By email	NA	7.3.17
26	Interview with local official	Cafe	60	8.3.17

	Details	Location	Length (minutes)	Date
27-29	Interview with half-marathon participants	By email	NA	15.3.17, 17.3.17, 20.3.17
30	Interview with museum staff member	Participant's workplace	60	16.3.17
31	Interview with museum staff member	Participant's workplace	15	16.3.17
32	Interview with shop owner	Participant's workplace	10	16.3.17
33	Interview with Discover Telford team	Participant's workplace	60	20.3.17
34-52	Interviews with tourists	Benthall Edge	5-10	29.3.17-30.3.17
53	Interview with local official	Participant's home	60	31.3.17
54-55	Interviews with museum volunteers	By email	NA	11.4.17-12.4.17
56-64	Interviews with tourists	Iron Bridge	5-10	1.5.17
65-73	Interviews with tourists	Iron Bridge	5-10	27.5.17
74-86	Interviews with tourists	Iron Bridge	5-10	17.6.17
87-89	Interviews with tourists	Iron Bridge	5-10	24.6.17
90-100	Interviews with tourists	Iron Bridge	5-10	1.7.17

	Details	Location	Length (minutes)	Date
101-103	Interviews with tourists	Benthall Edge	5-10	1.7.17
104	Interviews with tourist	Ironbridge	10	9.7.17
105	Interview with tourist	Old Furnace	10	10.7.17
106-140	Interviews with tourists	Blists Hill	5-10	27.7.17-29.7.17
141-146	Interviews with tourists	Old Furnace	5-10	1.8.17
147	Interviews with tourist	Ironbridge	5	2.8.17
148-173	Interviews with tourists	Old Furnace	5-10	3.8.17-6.8.17
174-176	Interviews with tourists	Benthall Edge	5-10	6.8.17
177-198	Interviews with tourists	Blists Hill	5-10	9.8.17-10.8.17
199-203	Interviews with tourists	Iron Bridge	5-10	10.8.17
204	Interview with Tim Jenkins, Shropshire County Council	Café	45	10.8.17
205	Interviews with tourist	Benthall Edge	5	11.8.17
206-207	Interviews with tourists	Ironbridge	5-10	11.8.17
208-212	Interviews with tourists	Iron Bridge	5-10	12.8.17

	Details	Location	Length (minutes)	Date
213-218	Interviews with tourists	Benthall Edge	5-10	12.8.17
219-234	Interviews with tourists	Old Furnace	5-10	16.8.17-17.8.17
235-240	Interviews with tourists	Ironbridge	5-10	17.8.17
241	Interview with Lauryn Etheridge, English Heritage	By phone	30	23.8.17

APPENDIX D

Sample Participant Information text included in a recruitment letter for stakeholders in a tourist facing role

I am a PhD student based at the Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural Heritage, University of Birmingham. I am carrying out research into the communication of World Heritage values to tourists at Ironbridge Gorge. It is part of a wider study of how different groups of people interact with the site.

I would love to get your insights on tourism to Ironbridge Gorge. I am looking for participants willing to give me a short interview (between 10-15 minutes depending on your availability). Getting involved in the project is a great way to get your thoughts and ideas about tourism in the Gorge communicated to a wide audience. The project will involve talking to lots of local businesses and people who work in the Gorge - make sure your voice is heard!

I would be very happy to share the results of the project with you. If you would like to find out more about the project, or register an interest in receiving information about the results, please get in touch using my contact details below.

No commercially sensitive information is required - just your observations and insights into what tourists do and say from the people who know the tourists best.

Participation is completely voluntary, and should you decide that you no longer wish to take part, for whatever reason, you would be completely free to do so. Information provided can be removed from the project up to a month after the interview.

You would not be identified personally in any publication of the research unless you give your specific consent. However it is possible that some participants may be identifiable by the nature of their post/role, even if names are not used. Please let me know if this is a concern. All data collected will be held in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Contact Details [of myself and the PI]

Sample Consent form (Non-anonymous participants)

PhD Research Project: The experience and negotiation of World Heritage values by tourists to Ironbridge Gorge

The project involves collection of information about tourism at the World Heritage Site of Ironbridge Gorge in Shropshire. Information provided by participants will be used in the production of the researchers PhD thesis and may be included in articles and other publications. The participant may be identified unless they wish to be kept anonymous. Should participants wish to withdraw information from the study they must do so within one month of the interview.

I have been informed of, and understand the purposes of the project, and I agree to participate in the study as outlined to me. I agree that the information I provide may be used in the ways described above and that withdrawal can only happen within one month of the interview.

Name (print)……
Signature…… Date…….

APPENDIX E

Interview Schedules

These reflect themes rather than exact questions.

Service Providers (e.g. shop and hotel staff, tour guides, museum staff)

General information about their role.

Importance of tourism to their business.

What are the main themes in their marketing?

How is World Heritage status/other features used in their marketing?

What information about Ironbridge can they provide to tourists?

How do they think tourists relate to the World Heritage status?

What sorts of things do tourists do in the Gorge?

What do they think is most important to tourists?

What is important to them about Ironbridge?

What do they understand about World Heritage?

Tourists (General)

Have you learnt anything new or interesting today?

Was it what you were expecting?

Awareness of World Heritage status

Do they know why Ironbridge Gorge is on the List

What do they think are the most important things about Ironbridge Gorge in general?

Extra questions (Benthall Edge)

How would you describe this area?

Did you see any of the industrial features here?

Did you find the signs useful?

Extra questions (Blists Hill exhibition)

Did you find the exhibition useful/interesting?

What did you understand about all the names in the corridor?

Extra questions (Old Furnace)

What did you make of it?

What did you like about it?

Did you find all the information you were looking for?

Do you know why this structure is important?

Extra questions (Iron Bridge)

What do you think of the Bridge?

Do you know why it's important/famous?

Key Informants (people involved in managing tourism to Ironbridge Gorge both at IGMT and elsewhere)

Introductory questions - role, length of time in role, clarifying relationship of their role to tourism in Ironbridge etc.

The values of Ironbridge Gorge (not exclusively World Heritage). Relative importance to each other.

Perception of what World Heritage Site status means for Ironbridge

Perceived distinction between Ironbridge Gorge as a World Heritage Site and Ironbridge Gorge Museums.

Role of World Heritage status/values in attracting tourists

Role of World Heritage status/values in communicating with tourists while they are in the area/the Gorge itself.

Distinction between the experience of museum visitors to non-museum visitors in terms of awareness and engagement with the World Heritage values of the site.

Would things be different (now and historically) if Ironbridge wasn't a World Heritage site?

Participant specific questions - focusing around the themes above but relating to specific projects and campaigns.

What about the future?

APPENDIX F

Sample interview with initial coding

Interview with local hotel manager (consent to identify)

Interviewed on 27.1.17

Q: Do you get mostly tourists here?

SP: We get a real mix - mostly tourists at weekends, but we do a lot of corporate Mon-Thurs and we also do a lot of weddings at weekends. Generally the tourists we get are retired.

Q: There is a noticeable family focus in other parts of the gorge…?

SP: I think they must either be staying elsewhere or just coming in for the day. These tourists come for the heritage, they love the heritage! We get a lot of group bookings and coach parties too. The 10 museums guarantee that if they come for 3 nights there will be plenty to do (and we also use it as a base for the market towns and other National Trust places in the area). It helps that it is a World Heritage Site - tourists can say 'I've been to a World Heritage Site'. They like the museums as well - they're not as intense… I don't mean boring, but compared to other museums… they're fun! Blists Hill has the pub and the sweet shop. It doesn't feel so 'educational' - it's fun. We also have the restaurant here, Chez Maw, and it is open to non-residents. That's mainly locals coming in from outside though - it's an expensive restaurant - a 'special occasion' restaurant. It has two AA rosettes so it's somewhere you would go for a *nice* meal.

Q: What's the history of the building? What's the painting here? [We were in the dining room and there is a large painting of one of the local factories on the wall]

SP: That's the Maw and Co factory in Jackfield. This was Mr Maw's house – it was called Severn House then. There are Jackfield tiles throughout and there's a painting of Mr Maw in the bar. The house was built in 1757 and is Grade II* listed, not because of the building itself but because of the tiling (in the hall) – he [Maw] made them and then broke the moulds so they're completely unique. There are also 3

Commented [I1]: Mix of tourists and non-tourists

Commented [I2]: Weekend tourists

Commented [I3]: Business tourists at weekends

Commented [I4]: Venue for weddings

Commented [I5]: Older demographic

Commented [I6]: Recognising there may be a different demographic for day visitors

Commented [I7]: 'Heritage' (non-specific) is the attraction

Commented [I8]: Museums guarantee plenty to do

Commented [I9]: The visitors they get in the hotel also likely to be drawn in by wider 'heritage' offer in the region – market towns and National Trust.

Commented [I10]: World Heritage status as a 'help' in marketing

Commented [I11]: Visiting WHS seen as an achievement of sorts, tick off that you've been to one.

Commented [I12]: IGMT museums are non-traditional – fun museums

Commented [I13]: Restaurant named for local industrialist but French styling to indicate quality

Commented [I14]: Connection to 'great man'

Commented [I15]: Original tiles and a painting as cues of the relationship to former owner

Commented [I16]: Emphasis on date and designation.

Commented [I17]: Storytelling

bedrooms with Jackfield tiled fireplaces. We do tell the visitors this if we see them looking at the tiles - they tend to reach out and touch them, and the staff are primed to tell them. They don't realise this history till they get here often, but we tell them! We do a package offer (you can find it on the website), the biggest of which is the 3 night leisure break offer with a passport ticket. We try not to sell too many [passport tickets], we mostly direct people to the museums, but we still sell a lot even so.

Q: How do people find out about you?

SP: We market mostly through e-marketing, although we are on social media accounts. We used to be really popular with business groups as they we were able to have the unique selling point in the area of being somewhere you could walk to a nice pub and go somewhere outside. We've lost business now to Southwater [Telford], but interestingly people are now coming back as they appreciate the non-chain end of the scale.

Commented [I18]: Storytelling

Commented [I19]: Tourists wanting to touch tiles

Commented [I20]: Tourists not expecting the industrial story

Commented [I21]: Combined marketing with IGMT

Commented [I22]: Hotel acting as signposting for museums

Commented [I23]: Importance of e-marketing

Commented [I24]: Business visitors appreciate the 'sense of place'

Commented [I25]: Tourists choosing to stay in the independents in Ironbridge rather than Telford chains

APPENDIX G

Examples of early memos based on interviews with accommodation providers

The communication of information to visitors at their place of accommodation
Accommodation is an important source of visitor information. It is a place where the visitor can not only pick up leaflets and maps (in the same way as they might get from going to a tourist information site) but also get personalised information through chatting with hosts. Accom 2 noted that 'everyone takes an IGM leaflet', while Accom 1 emphasised that it is in their best interests to enthuse about the area's attractions - they want people to come back! Accom 4 noted that visitors are always directed to the nearby Hay Inclined Plane.
Further, the nature of many of the buildings in Ironbridge Gorge means that visitors may well be staying somewhere with its own story to tell as part of the wider narrative of the Gorge. This is particularly apparent at the Valley Hotel, formerly Severn House, the home of the owner of Maw & Co, and which is full of original (and unique) Jackfield tiles (https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1054130)

The nature of visitors
There was an interesting selection bias here. With the exception of Accom 4, interviews to date have suggested that staying visitors tend to be retired/older people. Accom 1 made the point that families visiting Blists Hill were likely to be day-trippers and thus, only in need of overnight accommodation if there was an event that ran on into the evening such as the fireworks. I think this is likely to be also influenced by the fact that families may be staying at the Youth Hostel, camp sites and self-catering accommodation. Accom 3 discussed the retired guest bias with me and suggested that families with young children probably would prefer a holiday rental rather than a formal hotel environment. This is borne out by figures shared with me by the YHA (Accom 4). They had 19,000 overnight stays last year. Excluding schools groups and assuming an average stay of 2 nights this works out as about 5000 guests over the course of the year, predominantly younger people with families. With self catering cottages and camping sites thrown into the mix it appears that it is not just that families/younger people tend to only come on day visits, although this probably is a large factor as well, but that they tend to stay in different types of accommodation. However, as the offer of tourist information is likely to be relatively consistent across the different accommodation types [follow up!] this may not have a significant effect on the communication of value.

There was some discussion about visitor 'types' which came through the interviews. Accom 1 noted that it was generally older people, particularly men, who were interested in the industrial history of the area. Accom 1 perceived ladies, especially those under 50, as being predominantly interested in shopping, restaurants and entertainment. Perhaps this is this based on the preconceived notions of Accom 1 themselves but they did make an additional connection which was interesting. In contrast to those who came for the museums specifically (Blists

Hill mentioned), those who stayed longer were interested in 'taking a break' and enjoying themselves. In other words, staying in the Gorge was motivated by the pursuit of more generalised 'leisure' rather than heritage in particular.

The significance of heritage for visitors

When asked why people came to the Gorge, based on their interactions with their guests, heritage in general, or more specific elements such as the Iron Bridge and the museums, was perceived as the main draw. This is an interesting contrast with the Ironbridge Businesses who also spoke a lot about the prettiness of the area and something to delve into further to see if it is a coincidence or not. The accommodation interviews (to date) have been quite adamant that it is heritage that brings people to the Gorge. This response came from an open question on what to do people come here for rather than a leading question about heritage, although the nature of my research might have skewed responses. The same question asked to the Ironbridge Businesses got heritage mentioned but landscape was also mentioned with as much frequency. Accom 3 stated that guests 'love the heritage', while Accom 1 stated that as 'Ironbridge has no beaches' heritage was basically the only thing to attract visitors!

In contrast to the significance of heritage as a reason to visit Ironbridge the activities of visitors in the Gorge are not as clear. People definitely visit museums. Indeed the non-traditional style of IGM was seen as a clear benefit for visitors of all ages, with Accom 3's largely retired guests enjoying the 'fun' nature of them (less 'educational'!) and Accom 4 noting that the museums are 'famously family-friendly'. However, the museum offer seems to sit a little uncomfortably with the wider concept of industrial heritage. While Accom 4 thought that people couldn't fail to find it interesting, Accom 1 considered it only really attractive to older men. Conversation with Phil Neal at Telford Steam Railway (separate notes) included talking about the difficulties of industrial history as an attraction. He noted that if people don't think they're interested its very difficult to get them to come along, and that the Steam Railway was too gritty, too industrial for many who might be okay with it if it was tidied up and made more beautiful. This is an interesting idea, as Ironbridge has very much been 'tidied up', so has it bridged the gap, and if so, has it done so by moving away from being an industrial landscape?

The role of World Heritage

All of the people interviewed were asked about the World Heritage status of the site and whether they thought people were aware of it or if it affected their decision to visit. When I tried to delve deeper I didn't tend to get answers - its as if there isn't much understanding that there is anything beyond the status as a brand. The idea of the values of the World Heritage Site, even when made explicit, didn't seem to evoke much understanding and answers tended not to relate to the question. Accommodation providers considered that they promoted the World Heritage status appropriately, with variations of 'we do push it, its on our website' heard in all the interviews. When asked if visitors were interested I got very vague answers - perhaps 50/50, 'I think they're aware of it' etc. The exception to this was Accom 3 who was much more enthusiastic about the status and introduced it into the conversation without prompting. The perception was that it was more significant to

visitors than at other places and I did wonder if visitors pick up on the enthusiasm of the people telling them about it. If its a quick note on the website never mentioned again guests may not think that its very important. At Accom 3 though an interesting connection was made about the 'kudos' that WHS status brings. Whilst other interviews have said that it gives the site greater status, Accom 3 considered that it gave additional kudos to the visitor, who would be able to proudly say that they 'have visited a World Heritage Site'. Here the story of the visit is closely linked to the status of the place visited.

What do visitors do?

Accommodation providers generally considered that guests went to museums, looked at the bridge, and enjoyed shopping and eating during their stay. However there were additional activities associated with more specialised travel. The Valley Hotel is used as both a wedding and a business venue (for people attending conferences in Telford). They also host groups of walkers and even classic car club visitors. All of these specialist activities are things done in the Gorge but for which the Gorge is a pleasant backdrop rather than the main focus. How much value, and which ones, can be communicated in these situations? And is it really any different to people who come for a break and happen to do it in a World Heritage Site?

Integrated Designation approach

Both Accom 3 and Accom 4 have deals with Ironbridge Gorge Museums, either just to sell passports as part of an integrated accomodation offer (Valley Hotel - Accom 3), or as part of a discount deal for members (YHA - Accom 4). It did not appear that this was something that would necessarily increase likelihood for museum visiting - many people who stay in YHA's are not members and yet Accom 4 considered that every visitor would go to at least one museum. Accom 3 preferred not to sell the passports and generally just pushed people towards where they could buy them personally, but noted that the deals with passports were bestsellers regardless. It appears that people want to go to the museums, so an offer in conjunction with accommodation might boost a particular accommodation provider but less likely to affect the museums.

Questions:

- see if I can get interviews with self-catering owners or stayers
- more B&B owners would be useful!
- AirBnB? Have asked for permission to contact hosts. Next steps? Stay?
- Complete online data collection and analysis
- TripAdvisor? Particularly Valley Hotel - do people pick up on the tiling?
- Prettiness vs heritage - is there a difference between the motivations of stayers vs day trippers?
- Is Accom 3 correct- do visitors see WHS status as something to add to their travel narratives?

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